



Ridván 2011 Annual Report

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

2006-2011



This Annual Report was compiled, edited, proofread, designed, and produced by staff members of the Secretariat of the National Spiritual Assembly, *The American Bahá'í*, and the National Teaching Office.

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Ridván 2011 Annual Report

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

Beloved Friends and Co-workers,

At Ridván last year, the Universal House of Justice shared the joyous news that, with the establishment of intensive programs of growth in 1,500 clusters throughout the world, the principal goal of the Five Year Plan had been attained. With heads bowed in gratitude to God for this “outstanding achievement, this signal victory,” the Supreme Body noted that all who had labored in the field would “appreciate the bounty He has bestowed on His community in granting it a full year to strengthen the pattern of expansion and consolidation now everywhere established, in preparation for the tasks it will be called upon to undertake in its next global enterprise.”

The American Bahá'í community was able to participate fully in the sense of victory conveyed in that message—for it had not only met but had surpassed the goal it had determined four years earlier to contribute to the worldwide total. Our joy was heightened by a message we received on the second day of last year's Bahá'í National Convention:

The Universal House of Justice was delighted to receive your email of 24 April 2010 with the joyous news that, by the close of the Ridván period, 236 intensive programs of growth will be well under way in the United States. ... Such an accomplishment is worthy of so blessed a community. Having assiduously nurtured the roots of so many of your sister communities decades ago, you celebrate with them now a mighty victory in a common enterprise that has raised to new levels the capacity of the Bahá'í world to contribute to the transformation of society. May the groundswell of activity that has secured this victory continue to build, raising your community to even loftier heights of service to the Cause.

The followers of the Blessed Beauty in this country of great promise have never been in a stronger position to offer His life-giving teachings to their fellow citizens and to work with them in building a truly spiritual, unified, and just society.

In the year since, devoted believers of all ages throughout the country have continued their pursuit of the Plan's aims. Guided by the Supreme Body's powerful and inspiring Riqvân 2010 message; with their insights deepened, their abilities enhanced, and their confidence reinforced through experience gained in a continual process of action and reflection; with their hearts moved by both the sacrifices of their sisters and brothers in the Cradle of the Faith and the deep hunger for spiritual truth they find all around them; and with their efforts encouraged and supported by the institutions of the Faith with ever greater wisdom, the followers of the Blessed Beauty in this country of great promise have never been in a stronger position to offer His life-giving teachings to their fellow citizens and to work with them in building a truly spiritual, unified, and just society.



Building capacity for growth

It would be difficult indeed for us to offer an adequate summary of the new “knowledge, skills, and insights” the community has acquired in the course of the past five years, let alone in the 15 years since the institute training process was formally established throughout the Bahá’í world. Those who have been active in service during this remarkable period in our history need only reflect on how their own understanding has developed in that time to gain a sense of the new capacities that have been generated and the great potential for growth that has been created. When, for example, we consider how rapidly the institute process has gained in strength during the Plan just ending, we get a glimmer of the victories that can be won in the Plan now beginning.

Impressive as it is that the number of intensive programs of growth across the nation increased from 34 to 236 in just five years, it is only one indicator of the vastness and power of the movement now under way. As you know, the Universal House of Justice has itself noted many of the lessons learned that signal an increased capacity in the Bahá’í community to advance the process of entry by troops. Our aim here is not to repeat or to attempt to rank them in importance, but to draw attention to several examples that illustrate an American Bahá’í community rapidly gaining in unity, capacity, and strength. In what follows, we highlight some important areas in which learning is taking place.

It is natural to expect that the early stages of any learning process will be characterized by a desire to reduce the skill being acquired to a series of mechanical steps. A student learning music, for example, necessarily begins with basic drills and develops the ability to create beautiful music only gradually. The same has been true in our collective learning about the institute process. We have spent a number of years thinking about the process in rather formulaic terms, but we are now reaching a new level of understanding. We are developing an increasing capacity to think of the growth of the Faith in terms of a continuing, multifaceted, and coherent process, rather than as a phenomenon driven either by one activity or many disparate ones. We are also gaining a greater appreciation of the organic nature of the institute process—meaning, among other things, that it does not lend itself to shortcuts, simplistic thinking, or artificially imposed lines of action. As the Supreme Body noted in its December 28, 2010 letter to the conference of the Continental Boards of Counselors, “[t]he abundant experience which has since accrued enables the believers now to conceive of the movement of a population, propelled by mounting spiritual forces, in terms of a rich and dynamic continuum.”

Our capacity for teaching has also evolved considerably, a development directly related to our aggregate understanding of the lessons in Book 6 of the Ruhi curriculum. As the House of Justice has noted, those who have resisted the tendency to reduce the lessons in that book to a formula have learned the value of the concepts they contain, adapting them as circumstances require. What is

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transpiring in any effective teaching experience is not recitation of a script, but a profound “spiritual conversation” between souls, characterized by genuine love and respect, and by sharing in a forthright manner the fundamental verities of the Faith and the Word of God in its pure form. We are also developing a more profound appreciation of what it means to work in neighborhoods with receptive populations—“receptivity” being defined to include all those who are willing to join us in the process of community building, whether they become believers or not. Moreover, we now understand that the phrase “door-to-door teaching” is inadequate when describing the true nature of the process of community building initiated in such neighborhoods.

Much still remains, of course, to be learned about the potential of the institute process. As the House of Justice wrote in its December 28 letter:

Without exception, having witnessed the transformative effects of the institute process first hand, the friends in such clusters are striving to gain a fuller appreciation of the dynamics that underlie it—the spirit of fellowship it creates, the participatory approach it adopts, the depth of understanding it fosters, the acts of service it recommends, and, above all, its reliance on the Word of God. Every effort is being exerted to ensure that the process reflects the complementarity of “being” and “doing” the institute courses make explicit; the centrality they accord to knowledge and its application; the emphasis they place on avoiding false dichotomies; the stress they lay on memorization of the Creative Word; and the care they exercise in raising consciousness, without awakening the insistent self.





We have come to understand that sustainable growth requires the continual development of new human resources and their deployment in the field of service.

It is especially pleasing to see the increasing contributions being made to the process of growth by Local Spiritual Assemblies. Although much remains to be learned in this area, it is already clear that the clusters that have experienced the most sustained progress enjoy the active support of their Assemblies. The individual members of such Assemblies have set an admirable example of leadership through their assumption of a humble posture of learning and their readiness to participate fully in the institute process and its associated activities. These Assemblies have developed loving and strong bonds with their Auxiliary Board members and cluster agencies, have consistently and systematically encouraged the friends in their services, and have offered their resources as needed to further the work in their respective clusters.

Lastly, we have come to understand that sustainable growth requires the continual development of new human resources and their deployment in the field of service. It does not require that a cluster start out with a large number of believers, but it does mean that the number of active servants steadily increases. We have seen cases in which a few dedicated believers have initiated programs of growth that have eventually grown to be as complex, as intensive, and as successful as those that began with relatively large numbers. Although we are still at an early stage in mastering the institute process, we can clearly see that sustained progress in any cluster has always depended upon this understanding of its dynamic. From what has already been seen, we can appreciate the observation of the House of Justice that "in virtually any cluster, it is possible for an expanding nucleus of individuals to generate a movement towards the goal of a new World Order."

We have much learning ahead and many milestones yet to be reached. The means to these goals is the institute process, which in the years immediately ahead will demand our full and focused attention.

New opportunities

The Universal House of Justice has provided us with two major documents to guide our work in the new Five Year Plan: its Riḍván 2010 message and the message to the conference of the Continental Boards of Counselors dated December 28, 2010. This substantive guidance summarizes the learning that has been gained throughout the Bahá'í world, reinforces the essential principles upon which the process of growth is founded, and charts the course of our efforts for the next five years. The insights these documents offer are too rich to be summarized. We ask every believer and every institution to give them thorough and constant attention now and throughout the coming five years.

One point, however, asserts itself above all others with perfect clarity: the foundation that has been laid over the course of the past 15 years is just the beginning. Our community is still far too small to play its destined role in shaping the affairs of human society. Significant growth is required. We have much learning ahead and many milestones yet to be reached. The means to these goals is the institute process, which in the years immediately ahead will demand our full and focused attention. Programs of growth must be initiated in as many clusters as possible and must be expanded significantly where they already exist. Therein will be abundant opportunities to advance “the frontiers of learning” about growth, as we achieve ever-deeper levels of understanding and refine our activities accordingly.

Referring to clusters where intensive programs of growth now exist, in its December 28 letter, the House of Justice writes:

Therein, then, lies the challenge that must be faced by those in the forefront of the learning process which will continue to advance over the course of the next Plan. Wherever an intensive programme of growth is established, let the friends spare no effort to increase the level of participation. Let them strain every nerve to ensure that the system which they have so laboriously erected does not close in on itself but progressively expands to embrace more and more people. Let them not lose sight of the remarkable receptivity they found—nay, the sense of eager expectation that awaited them—as they gained confidence in their ability to interact with people of all walks of life and converse with them about the Person of Bahá'u'lláh and His Revelation. Let them hold fast to the conviction that a direct presentation of the Faith, when carried out at a sufficient level of depth and reinforced by a sound approach to consolidation, can bring enduring results. And let them not forget the lessons of the past which left no doubt that a relatively small band of active supporters of the Cause, no matter how resourceful, no matter how consecrated, cannot attend to the needs of communities comprising hundreds, much less thousands, of men, women and children. The implications are clear enough. If, in a cluster, those shouldering respon-

sibility for expansion and consolidation number in the tens, with a few hundred participating in the activities of community life, both figures should rise significantly so that by the end of the Plan, one or two hundred are facilitating the participation of one or two thousand.

It should be clear from the above passage that we have only begun to understand the art of learning; and we are still at the threshold of experiencing what it means to accompany each other in our various paths of service. In this connection, we are reminded how much of its recent guidance the House of Justice has devoted to the spiritual qualities that must attend our services. To take but one example—from its Riḍván 2010 message—regarding our attitude of learning:

Learning as a mode of operation requires that all assume a posture of humility, a condition in which one becomes forgetful of self, placing complete trust in God, reliant on His all-sustaining power and confident in His unfailing assistance, knowing that He, and He alone, can change the gnat into an eagle, the drop into a boundless sea. And in such a state souls labour together ceaselessly, delighting not so much in their own accomplishments but in the progress and services of others.

And this, from its December 28 letter, on the matter of accompaniment:

As an increasing number of believers participate in the teaching and administrative work, undertaken with a humble attitude of learning, they should come to view every task, every interaction, as an occasion to join hands in the pursuit of progress and to accompany one another in their efforts to serve the Cause. In this way will the impulse to over-instruct be quieted. In this way will the tendency to reduce a complex process of transformation into simplistic steps, susceptible to instruction by manual, be averted.

Beyond these are many other spiritual disciplines and characteristics that should increasingly distinguish our individual lives, the operation of our institutions, and the life of our communities. In its December 28 letter, the Supreme Body reminds us in remarkable terms that the spiritual prerequisites of success in teaching—memorably elucidated by the beloved Guardian—can be realized through engagement in the very processes at the heart of the Plan:

The educational process associated with the training institute is, of course, helping to foster the spiritual conditions to which the Guardian referred in The Advent of Divine Justice, along with the many others mentioned in the writings that must distinguish the life of the Bahá'í community—the spirit of unity that must animate the friends, the ties of love that must bind them, the firmness in the Covenant that must sustain them, and the reliance and trust they must place on the power of divine assistance, to note but a few. That such essential attributes are developed in the context of building capacity for service, in an environment that cultivates systematic action, is particularly noteworthy.

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The Cradle of the Faith

For more than three decades our fellow believers in the Cradle of the Faith have been called upon to make extraordinary sacrifices for their love of the Blessed Beauty. They have met these trials with a degree of steadfastness and resolve that are an inspiration to the entire worldwide Bahá'í community. There can be no doubt that the spiritual forces released by their sacrifices have helped to secure the victories in teaching now being experienced across the globe.

Their moral integrity, their spirit of service, their refusal to harbor any thoughts of reprisal, the love they hold for their native land, as much as for the entire world—all these are increasingly apparent to unbiased observers. Their fidelity and high sense of principle have caused the name of the Faith to be known and celebrated throughout the world. Determined to work for the betterment of their country in spite of the proscriptions against them—no less than to see the Faith grow and prosper in the land of its birth—they have attracted the respect of large numbers of fair-minded Iranians. As a result, the past five years have witnessed a new phenomenon, as Iranian leaders of thought—in the media, in academia, and among the community of human rights advocates—have come forward in public defense of their long-suffering fellow citizens. The Bahá'í Faith is now, in the eyes of countless Iranians, no longer a heresy or a subversive political movement, but a legitimate religion, and its members sincerely interested in the betterment of Iranian society. The Faith has also emerged as a legitimate field of study among scholars—a fact signaled most notably by the



establishment at the end of 2010 of the new Taslimi Lectureship on Bahá'í Religion and History in Iran at the University of California at Los Angeles. The idea for the lectureship was initiated by the University and is being supported through an endowment established by a family of believers who are all UCLA alumni. This is an enormous and historic step forward in recognition of the Faith on the part of Iranian studies scholars.



The severity of the persecutions being faced by the Iranian friends did not abate in the past year. As you know, the seven former members of the administrative group known as the Yárán were—following a trial that could only be called a travesty of justice—each sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. Though this was subsequently reduced to 10 years, our latest information is that the original sentence of 20 years' imprisonment for each has now been reinstated. The conditions under which these innocent souls continue to serve their sentences are extremely harsh and perilous. Dozens more believers are currently incarcerated, and countless others continue to be deprived of the freedom to marry, to earn a living, to obtain an education, to own property—even to have their graves protected from molestation.

The United Nations, numerous national governments including our own, the international human rights community, major international and national media outlets, and countless prominent individuals have condemned the treatment of Bahá'ís at the hands of the Iranian government and have called for all human rights in Iran to be protected. The Bahá'ís have joined in that call—for it is not only protection for ourselves but justice for everyone that is our true goal.

We are deeply grateful for the efforts you have made to speak out on behalf of your Iranian sisters and brothers—whether in special devotional meetings, in interactions with the media, in outreach to elected officials, or in the many other ways you have stood in solidarity with them. We know that you will continue to remember them in your prayers and will continue to make your voices heard on the matter—mindful that victories in the teaching field are ultimately the greatest means of redeeming their sacrifices and demonstrating to friend and foe alike the unconquerable power of the Cause of God.

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We have no doubt that the victories that can be won during the next five years are even greater. Contemplating these matters inspires feelings of profound gratitude to the Blessed Beauty for His mighty and unfailing confirmations.

Conclusion

The pages that follow begin with a summary of the activities being conducted by the Regional Bahá'í Councils and the Regional Training Institutes, which serve as the Assembly's primary agents for growth. These reports offer a detailed account of the achievements of the past year in each region of the country. We also chronicle significant developments in external affairs and communications, the Funds, the Bahá'í schools, international pioneering, the restoration of the House of Worship and historic properties, the publication and distribution of Bahá'í literature, the advancing of public discourse and of learning about social action, the junior youth spiritual empowerment program, numerous organizations affiliated with the National Spiritual Assembly, and many other offices and agencies. In the aggregate, these activities are meant to harmonize and lend further impetus to the spiritual forces being generated at the grass roots of the community as a result of the continuing teaching work.

Another measure of our collective spiritual maturity lies in our willingness to sacrifice materially for the Faith's progress. We here feel moved to offer a reminder that the programs and administrative mechanisms essential for the uninterrupted progress of the Faith depend on constant and generous financial contributions from every believer for their successful operation. Our contributions to the Funds of the Faith attract heavenly blessings and set our work on a firm foundation. We are humbled by and grateful for the sacrifices so many have made in the past few years, under especially difficult circumstances. We pray that in the coming years the community will make significant strides forward toward universal participation in this, as in all other areas of service.

The achievements of the past five years have been extraordinary. We have no doubt that the victories that can be won during the next five years are even greater. Contemplating these matters inspires feelings of profound gratitude to the Blessed Beauty for His mighty and unfailing confirmations.

We are deeply grateful to the members of the Continental Board of Counselors for the Americas, who have accompanied the National Assembly and the entire community on this journey with such love and untiring devotion. We also wish to offer our thanks to the members of their Auxiliary Boards for their energetic and sacrificial efforts; to the Regional Bahá'í Councils, Regional Training Institutes, and the institute coordinators serving at various levels, whose efforts are a source of joy and pride; to the devoted souls who arose to serve the Faith as international and homefront pioneers; and to each of you, whose wholehearted embrace of the guidance of the Universal House of Justice is the surest guarantee of our ultimate success.

Finally, we offer our humble thanks to that "source of all good," the Universal House of Justice—the Institution ordained by Bahá'u'lláh to guide His Cause to its destiny, pure, whole, and victorious. We can do no better than to close with the following words of the Supreme Body—from its January 1 letter to the

Bahá'ís of the world—which celebrate your achievements and offer an unequivocal promise of the triumphs to come:

We praise God that He has raised up a community so accomplished and render thanks to Him for releasing your marvelous potentialities. You it is who, whether in collective endeavors or individual efforts, are presenting the verities of the Faith and assisting souls to recognize the Blessed Beauty. You it is who, in your tens of thousands, are serving as tutors of study circles wherever receptivity is kindled. You it is who, without thought of self, are providing spiritual education to the child and kindly fellowship to the junior youth. You it is who, through visits to homes and invitations to yours, are forging ties of spiritual kinship that foster a sense of community. You it is who, when called to serve on the institutions and agencies of the Cause, are accompanying others and rejoicing in their achievements. And it is all of us, whatever our share in this undertaking, who labour and long, strive and supplicate for the transformation of humanity, envisioned by Bahá'u'lláh, to be hastened....

We are certain that, through the consultations about the Plan in which you participate, your understanding will deepen and, conscious of the spiritual forces that support you, you will resolve to make this global enterprise a personal concern and become as occupied with the well-being of the human family as you are with that of your dearest kin. It brings us great joy that so many souls throughout the Bahá'í community are ready to thus distinguish themselves. But what gratifies us beyond this is the certain knowledge that victories will be won in the next five years by youth and adults, men and women, who may at present be wholly unaware of Bahá'u'lláh's coming, much less acquainted with the "society-building power" of His Faith.

To the prayers and sentiments of the Universal House of Justice, we humbly add our own supplications that the Beloved of the World will surround you always with His all-embracing love and abundant blessings.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

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Regional Bahá'í Council of the Central States

During 2010–11, the work of the Regional Bahá'í Council of the Central States was focused primarily on four areas:

- Strengthening the institute training process.
- Developing teaching programs at the cluster and neighborhood levels.
- Improving the quality and effectiveness of the Seeker Response System (SRS).
- Increasing the accuracy and efficiency of our Statistical Reporting Program.

Strengthening the institute training process

Seeking a definitive answer to the question “Can we increase the number of enrollments by increasing the number of participants in core activities?”, the Regional Training Institute’s Board set a goal for each of 35 clusters: engage 10 seekers new to the Ruhi curriculum in Book 1 training. Although the institute fell short of its goal of increasing the number of seekers in Book 1 training, there was a marked increase in the number of community of interest members involved in core activities, rising from 893 in February 2010 to 1,154 a year later—a 29 percent increase (see “Regional growth profile,” page 16). There was, however, only a modest increase in the total number of enrollments, which, during the same 12-month period, rose from 388 to 413, a gain of just 6.4 percent (also see page 16). We can conclude that while our skills in inviting people to core activities have improved, our teaching skills need further development.

Another significant instance of learning came in the area of spiritual empowerment programs for junior youth. In an effort to stimulate the development of junior youth programs, nine animators were sent to one of two national learning

13 ...Regional Bahá'í Council of the Central States

17 ...Regional Bahá'í Council of the Northeastern States

20 ...Regional Bahá'í Council of the Northwestern States

23 ...Regional Bahá'í Council of the South Central States

27 ...Regional Bahá'í Council of the Southeastern States

31 ...WLG1-FM Radio Bahá'í

33 ...Regional Bahá'í Council of the Southwestern States

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Expansion during cycles of activities in all clusters

	Number of friends involved in teaching activities	Youth and adults enrolled May through January	Estimated seekers in core activities at end of cycle
Jan. 31, 2008	585	203	643
Jan. 31, 2009	738	271	848
Jan. 31, 2010	919	255	893
Jan. 31, 2011	1027	278	1085
Pct. increase, 2010–2011	12%	9%	22%

sites for training as coordinators. This eventually led to a significant increase in the number of junior youth programs in the cluster, which rose from 39 to 46, an increase of 17 percent.

In addition, there was a 23 percent increase—from 221 to 273—in junior youth participants in these programs. There was also a remarkable 74.7 percent increase in the number

of junior youths in these programs who are not registered Bahá'ís, from 87 to 152, demonstrating that our junior youth programs have a very strong outward-looking focus. These successes with junior youth programs will give us pause to consider how we can achieve similar results in other facets of the training institute's work.

The Office of Cluster Advancement

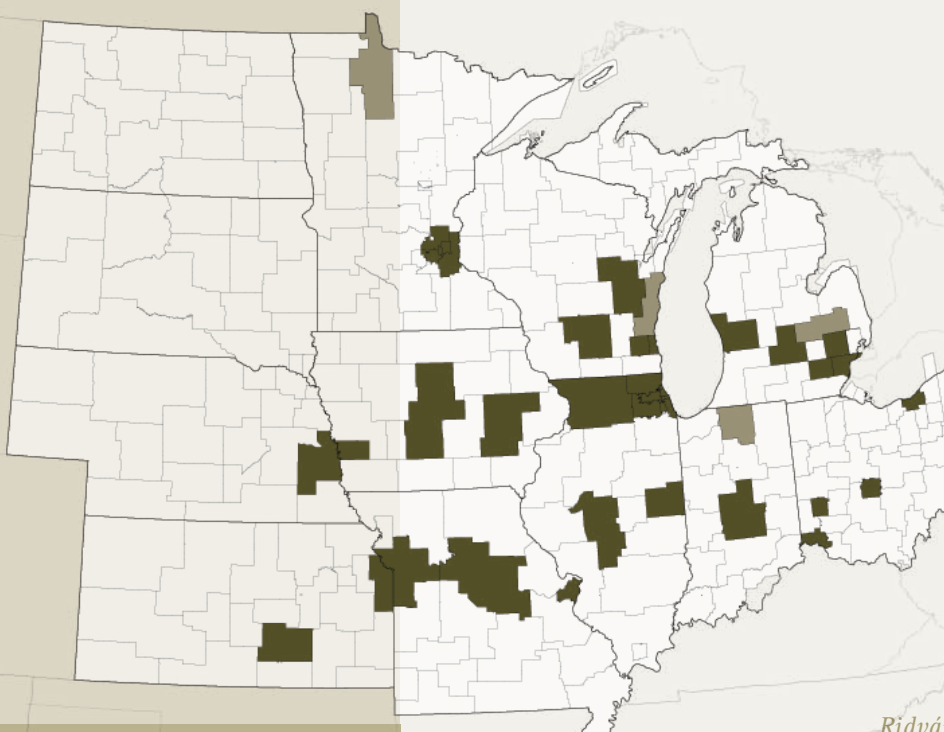
Representatives of the Office of Cluster Advancement (OCA) have been at work now for approximately one year, providing their valuable experience and support to Area Teaching Committees (ATCs). The OCA helps ATCs to marshal cluster resources for launching and sustaining teaching and consolidation programs. The

A remarkable 74.7 percent increase in the number of junior youths who are not registered Bahá'ís demonstrates that our junior youth spiritual empowerment programs have a very strong outward-looking focus.

Completion of Ruhi courses by youth and adults

	Bk 1	Bk 2	Bk 3	Bk 4	Bk 5	Bk 6	Bk 7
Jan. 1, 2007	2429	1684	1259	1092	118	821	769
Jan. 31, 2008	2635	1918	1462	1443	158	1097	908
Jan. 31, 2009	2708	1989	1540	1565	221	1193	953
Jan. 31, 2010	2709	2091	1624	1641	282	1316	1103
Jan. 31, 2011	3009	2250	1728	1781	353	1401	1197
Pct. increase, 2010–2011	11%	8%	6%	9%	25%	6%	9%

Stages of advancement in the Central Region as of 3/30/2011



'A'-stage clusters

IA-07 (Ames/Des Moines, IA)
 IA-14 (Cedar Rapids, IA)
 IL-01 (Rockford, IL)
 IL-02 (Waukegan, IL)
 IL-03 (Aurora area, IL)
 IL-09 (Springfield, IL)
 IL-11 (Champaign, IL)
 IL-16 (Chicago, IL)
 IL-17 (Evanston area, IL)
 IL-18 (Des Plaines, IL)
 IL-20 (Wilmette area, IL)
 IN-01 (Indianapolis, IN)
 KS-13 (Wichita, KS)
 MI-09 (Grand Rapids, MI)
 MI-11 (Central Lower Peninsula, MI)
 MI-17 (Ann Arbor, MI)
 MI-18 (Oakland Co., MI)
 MI-28 (Wayne Co., MI)
 MN-27 (Minneapolis, MN)
 MN-28 (St. Paul/Ramsey Co., MN)
 MN-30 (E & SE Mpls/St. Paul area)
 MN-33 (Hennepin Co. S., MN)
 MN-34 (Hennepin Co. North, MN)
 MO-01 (St. Louis Co., MO)
 MO-03 (Columbia, MO)
 MO-07 (Kansas City, MO/KS)
 NE-13 (Omaha, NE/IA)
 OH-01 (Cleveland area, OH)
 OH-03 (Columbus/Franklin Co., OH)
 OH-05 (Cincinnati, OH)
 OH-06 (Dayton, OH)
 WI-16 (Appleton, WI)
 WI-19 (Madison, WI)
 WI-21 (Waukesha Co., WI)
 WI-22 (Milwaukee Co., WI)

'B'-stage clusters

IN-03 (Elkhart, IN)
 MI-08 (Davison/Flint, MI)
 MN-02 (Lake of the Woods Co., MN)
 WI-17 (Sheboygan, WI)



work of the OCA representatives has helped all 35 of the Central States' clusters with intensive programs of growth in place to develop rhythmic cycles of planning, teaching, consolidation, and reflection. The Council expects that the OCA's work will help ATCs mount increasingly effective teaching campaigns at the cluster and neighborhood levels.

The Seeker Response System

The Central States are consistently receiving the highest number of seeker inquiries through the national Seeker Response System. A total of 852 were received during 2010–11, most of which originated within 100 miles of the Bahá'í House of Worship, with the Chicago cluster receiving the highest number of all—132 in one year!

Of these 852 inquiries, 17 percent took the form of online declarations. Over 90 percent of the declarants in this number are now enrolled. The online declarations account for 41 percent of all newly enrolled believers in the region.

By fostering a closer collaboration among regional response coordinators, cluster agencies, and Local Spiritual Assemblies, the work of responding to these seeker inquiries and online declarations is becoming an integral part of each cluster's coherent approach to growth.

The Council has begun efforts to shift the responsibility for seeker response from the regional coordinators to the cluster level in clusters with intensive programs of growth in place—begin-

Regional growth profile, February 2010 to February 2011

	2010	2011
CHILDREN'S CLASSES		
Classes	146	153
Attendees	762	745
COI*	303	331
JUNIOR YOUTH GROUPS		
Activities	39	46
Attendees	221	273
COI*	87	152
STUDY CIRCLES		
Activities	298	263
Attendees	1002	868
COI*	188	215
DEVOTIONALS		
Activities	248	246
Attendees	1573	1576
COI*	505	498

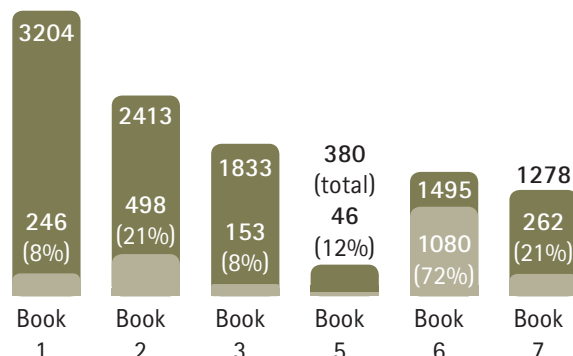
*Community of interest

more on page 16 →

With closer collaboration among regional response coordinators, cluster agencies, and Local Spiritual Assemblies, the work of responding to Web and phone seeker inquiries and online declarations is becoming an integral part of each cluster's coherent approach to growth.

To address a need for communication about data collection and use, a “Data Demystification” workshop was designed and is being delivered at gatherings throughout the region.

Mobilization of human resources in the practices associated with Ruhi courses



ning with those that have a combination of high levels of inquiries and effective response. So far, six of the 35 “A” clusters are responding directly to inquiries and five or six more are expected to do so by Riḍván 2011.

The Statistical Reporting Program

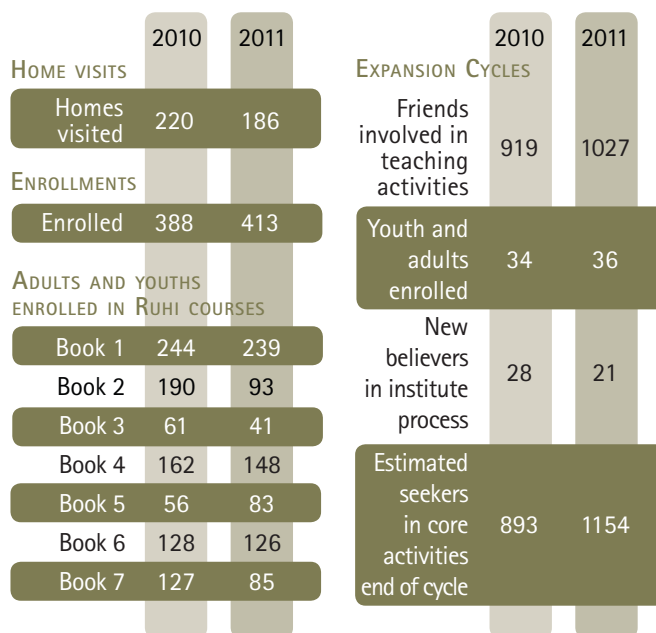
To better identify and measure growth in human resources, the

Council decided to work this year on improving the quality and level of coverage of its Statistical Reporting Program. Cluster Statistics Officers (CSOs) have been appointed to nearly all “A”-stage clusters and SRP assistants to nearly all “C”-stage clusters. A small project dramatically reduced the number of Bahá’ís in the Central States who were previously designated “gender unknown” in

UnityWeb—the National Spiritual Assembly’s membership database—from several hundred to about 40. A survey asking CSOs their main concerns about their service revealed the need for individuals, cluster agencies, and Bahá’í institutions to communicate with each other about data collection and use. To address this,

a “Data Demystification” workshop was designed and is being delivered at gatherings throughout the region. In the interest of advancing the process of entry by troops, the workshop aims to facilitate collaboration between cluster agencies and Local Assemblies related to data collection, data analysis, and data use. In the Central States, the workshop has been held in “A”-stage clusters in two metropolitan areas; four more workshops are planned, which will complete its delivery to all areas of the Central States.

Regional growth profile, continued from page 15



Regional Bahá'í Council of the Northeastern States

The year 2010–11—a year of transition between two Five Year Plans—was as dynamic for the Northeastern States as it was for the entire Bahá'í world. As the year progressed, the Council was able to see both satisfying results and significant challenges for the region, each of which provide important learning we can apply to our actions in the year ahead.

One such result can be seen in the 33 clusters, out of 48 in the Northeastern States, that each have established an intensive program of growth. It is worth noting that some 90 percent of all Bahá'ís in the region reside in these 33 clusters.

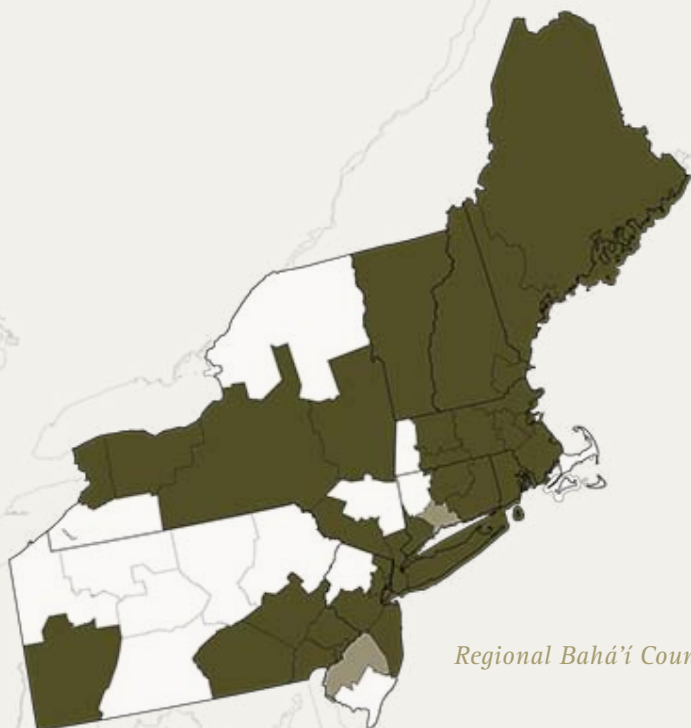
A concomitant challenge in the years ahead will be the achieving of sustained expansion and consolidation of the Faith in the region, marked by the progress of a steady stream of the friends through the training institute's full sequence of courses and by their engaging in the corresponding activities.

Unity of vision

Thanks to shared vision and collaboration among the Faith's institutions in the region, the Northeastern States advanced on many fronts during 2010–11. One significant example continued to be in the enrollments of adults and youth, which have been 50 percent higher during this Five Year Plan than they had been during the previous Plan, increasing from 603 to a total of 905.

Enrollments of adults and youth have been 50 percent higher during this Five Year Plan than they had been during the previous Plan.

Stages of advancement in the Northeast Region as of 3/30/2011



'A'-stage clusters

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 01 (Fairfield Co., CT) | 23 (Jersey Shore, NJ) |
| 02 (Hartford/Tolland, CT) | 24 (Newark area, NJ) |
| 05 (New London area, CT) | 27 (Albany area, NY) |
| 06 (Lower ME/NH) | 28 (Buffalo area, NY) |
| 07 (Upper Maine) | 30 (Long Island, NY) |
| 08 (New Hampshire) | 31 (New York City, NY) |
| 09 (Vermont) | 32 (Newburgh area, NY) |
| 11 (Boston area, MA) | 35 (Rochester area, NY) |
| 12 (Bristol/Plymouth, MA) | 36 (Syracuse area, NY) |
| 14 (Franklin/Hampshire, MA) | 37 (Westchester Co., NY) |
| 15 (Hampden Co., MA) | 38 (Allentown/Reading, PA) |
| 16 (Northeast Massachusetts) | 41 (Harrisburg/Lancaster, PA) |
| 17 (S. Middlesex Co., MA) | 42 (Philadelphia, PA) |
| 18 (Worcester Co., MA) | 43 (Philadelphia NW, PA) |
| 19 (Rhode Island) | 44 (Philadelphia SW, PA) |
| 20 (Bergen/Passaic, NJ) | 45 (Pittsburgh area, PA) |
| 21 (Central Jersey, NJ) | |

'B'-stage clusters

- 04 (New Haven Co., CT)
- 22 (Cherry Hill area, NJ)

Regional Bahá'í Councils

Our challenge now will be to dramatically increase the number of neighborhood children's classes and junior youth groups. We must also increase the number of active tutors willing to work to reach a higher degree of excellence.

Developing patterns of sustainable growth cycle after cycle in the clusters will challenge us in the years ahead. Answers will come through reliance on the spiritual forces at our disposal and deep study and reflection on the Ridván 2010, December 28, 2010, and January 1, 2011 messages of the Universal House of Justice.

The Regional Training Institute

During the Plan now concluding, the Regional Training Institute was strengthened to a point where it could evolve to the next level of development. The National Spiritual Assembly appointed a new five-member Northeast Regional Training Institute Board of Directors. The Council is confident that the training institute will develop the human resources needed to achieve at least the first milestone in every cluster in the Northeast.

The total number of core activities in the region grew over the course of the Plan by more than 82 percent—from 413 to a total of over 750. The number of seekers participating in these four core activities grew by over 92 percent—from 771 to 1,480.

Our challenge now will be to dramatically increase the number of neighborhood children's classes and junior youth groups. We must also increase the number of active tutors willing to work to reach a higher degree of excellence.

The role of Local Spiritual Assemblies

Local Spiritual Assemblies have an important role to play in motivating people to action and supporting the cluster agencies. Assembly workshops conducted by the Council have been successful at increasing collaboration among all the cluster agencies and Local Spiritual Assemblies. The collection and use of vital statistical information is also an important role Assemblies can provide.

Council members have combined with Auxiliary Board members in consultation with many individual Assemblies and with groups of Assemblies on the Assembly's role in the Five Year Plan. The Council hopes to develop follow-up engagements with Assemblies that will foster the strengthening of the institute process.

The Office of Cluster Advancement

The Council's Office of Cluster Advancement is building capacity in Area Teaching Committees. The year 2010–11 saw Area Teaching Committees and cluster institute coordinators collaborating ever more effectively with Auxiliary Board members and their assistants. This was, in part, a result of increased personal accompaniment of Area Teaching Committees by the coordinator of the Office of Cluster Advancement and others enlisted to support clusters.

As a result, Bahá'is—in general, members of agencies and the core group of believers serving the cluster—more fully understand and embrace the processes of the recent series of global plans.

In keeping with the vision of the Universal House of Justice—as expressed in its message of December 28, 2010—we must aim to achieve the kind of growth by which not a handful but one or two hundred in a cluster will shoulder responsibility for expansion and consolidation, facilitating the participation of one or two thousand.

Youth and young adults

During 2010–11, youth and young adults were encouraged to move to the forefront of the institute training process. The Council continues to encourage youth, at age 15, to enter the institute process and complete the entire sequence of Ruhi courses while still in high school.

Two summer youth projects have emerged in the region. The cluster agencies and parents increasingly help the training institute engage youths to serve as teachers of children's classes, animators of junior youth groups, and tutors of study circles.

More youths are needed, however, to serve in clusters where they live or attend school. Young people need skills to help multiply core activities and increase outreach to the wider population, particularly to their peers.

The Bahá'í Fund

The Funds of the Faith provide vital support to all the activities of the Council and cluster agencies. Contributions to the Northeast deputization fund support homefront pioneers. Contributions to the National Bahá'í Fund, earmarked to the Regional Bahá'í Council of the Northeastern States, move the region closer to self-sufficiency.

The contributions of individual believers, Assemblies, and groups in the region provide for approximately one-third of the combined expenses of the Council and the Regional Training Institute. Some 70 percent of all Assemblies in the region support the work of the Council through designated contributions.

The Council's challenge in this area will be to increase the number of individuals, registered groups, and Local Spiritual Assemblies supporting the National Fund, as well as the other funds of the Faith—including the Council's branch of the National Fund.

Seeker Response System

The Seeker Response System effectively engages seekers and facilitates the enrollment of online declarants, helping both to find core activities in which to participate. It engages seekers who contact the Faith and connects them to the cluster agencies, community activities, and teachers in the clusters where they reside. Online declarations are now part of the seeker response process. In 2010, the Northeastern States received 99 online declarations of faith, resulting in 66 enrollments—approximately 25 percent of the total enrollments in the region for that year. Of those enrolled, 71 percent are now participating in at least one core activity.

During 2010–11, a total of about 500 people entered the Seeker Response System. Some 75 percent came from www.bahai.us and 25 percent from 800-22UNITE or inquiries at the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette. Over 60 percent of these inquirers were successfully contacted.

The next challenge will be to develop the system at the regional and cluster levels so the response can be accelerated, thus accommodating the larger number of people entering the system.

Homefront pioneers

One of the outstanding features of our region is the service of a high number of homefront pioneers. Some 83 homefront pioneers have arisen since December 2008 and settled in priority clusters and in receptive neighborhoods in 23 clusters in the Northeastern States.

At this writing, 58 of these devoted souls are still at their pioneer posts, collaborating with the cluster agencies to further the process of growth.

Cluster institutions and agencies need to encourage and accompany increasing numbers of homefront pioneers and visiting teams in more clusters to engage in activities that result in the resident population taking responsibility for the processes of community building.

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In May, various regional institutions and agencies deliberated on our response to the call to “strengthen the pattern of expansion and consolidation” to better prepare for the new Five Year Plan.

Regional Bahá’í Council of the Northwestern States

Joy-filled, collaborative action

A palpable sense of joy was felt by friends across the Northwest as the year 2010–11 began, stemming from the marvelous victories achieved with the winning of intensive program of growth goals in our region. That joy steadily grew as believers embraced study of the Universal House of Justice’s *Riḍván* 2010 message. At an inter-institutional gathering in May, friends serving on various regional institutions and agencies deliberated on action steps to take in response to the call in that message to “strengthen the pattern of expansion and consolidation” present in our clusters in order to better prepare for the new Five Year Plan ahead.

'A'-stage clusters

CO–09 (Grand Junction / Mesa Co., CO)
 CO–13 (Colorado Springs, CO)
 CO–14 (Fort Collins, CO)
 CO–15 (Boulder, CO)
 CO–16 (Lakewood, CO)
 CO–17 (Westminster/Arvada, CO)
 CO–18 (Arapahoe/Douglas Co., CO)
 CO–19 (Denver, CO)
 ID–01 (Boise, ID)
 OR–08 (Grants Pass, OR)
 OR–09 (Jackson Co., OR)
 OR–14 (Eugene/Lane Co., OR)
 OR–15 (Corvallis/Benton/Linn Cos., OR)
 OR–18 (Salem/Woodburn, OR)
 OR/WA–20 (The Dalles–Hood River–Wasco Co., OR/WA)
 OR–23 (Milwaukie/Gladstone, OR)
 OR–24 (Tigard/Lake Oswego/West Linn, OR)
 OR–26 (Beaverton/Washington Co., OR)
 OR–31 (Portland, OR)
 UT–06 (North Salt Lake Valley, UT)
 UT–09 (South Salt Lake Valley, UT)
 WA–01 (Port Angeles/Olympic Peninsula, WA)
 WA–04 (Vancouver/Clark Co., WA)
 WA–05 (Bremerton/Kitsap Co., WA)
 WA–06 (Olympia/Mason/Thurston Cos., WA)
 WA–08 (Redmond/N. King Co., WA)
 WA–09 (Whatcom/Skagit Cos., WA)
 WA–13 (Snohomish Co., WA)
 WA–14 (Seattle area, WA)
 WA–15 (Bellevue/Cent. King Co., WA)
 WA–17 (Renton/S. King Co., WA)
 WA–19 (Tacoma/Pierce Co., WA)
 WA–24 (Yakima, WA)
 WA/ID–28 (Spokane, WA/Kootenai Co., ID)

'B'-stage clusters

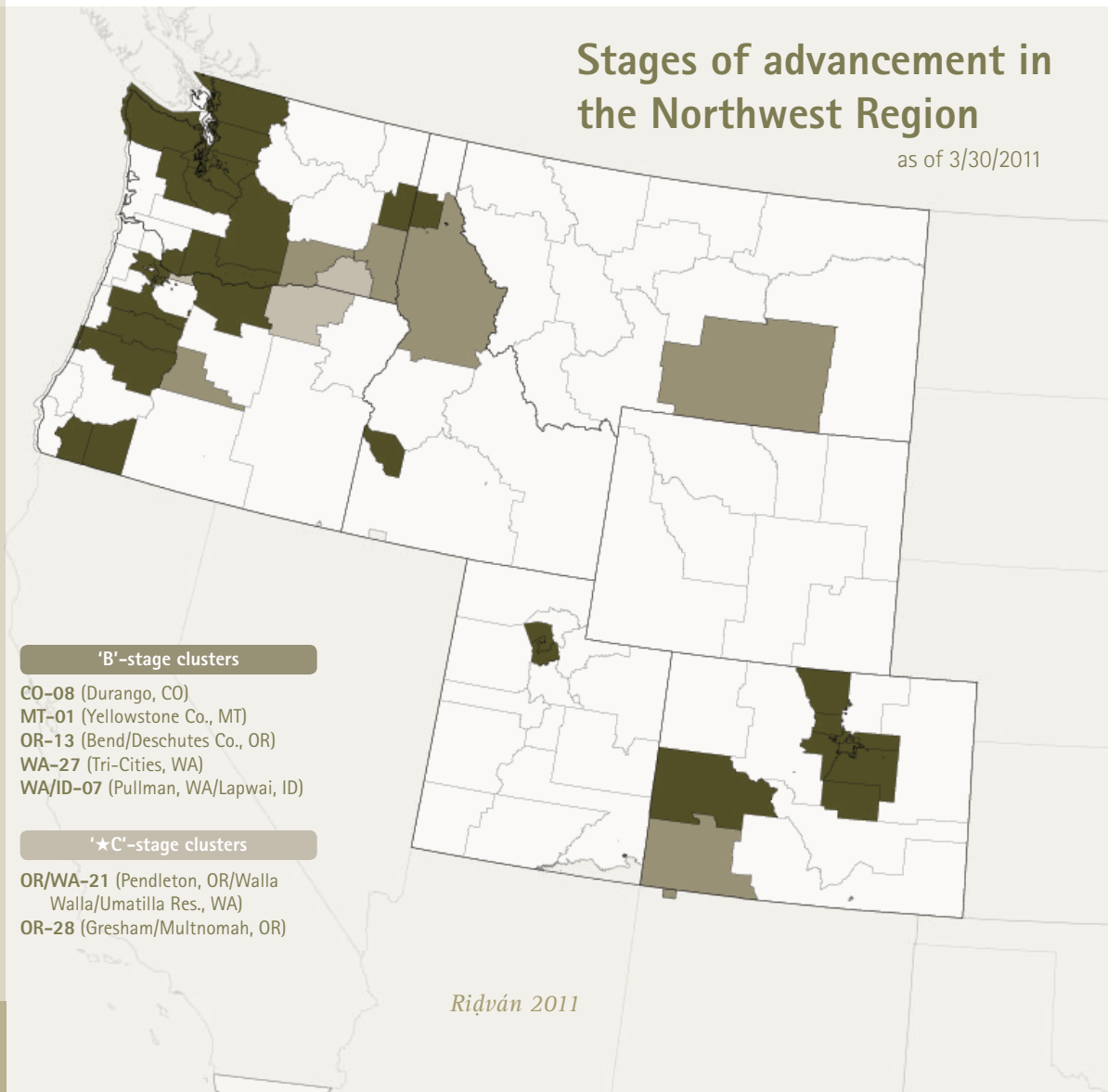
CO–08 (Durango, CO)
 MT–01 (Yellowstone Co., MT)
 OR–13 (Bend/Deschutes Co., OR)
 WA–27 (Tri-Cities, WA)
 WA/ID–07 (Pullman, WA/Lapwai, ID)

'★C'-stage clusters

OR/WA–21 (Pendleton, OR/Walla Walla/Umatilla Res., WA)
 OR–28 (Gresham/Multnomah, OR)

Stages of advancement in the Northwest Region

as of 3/30/2011



Riḍván 2011



Some Council efforts to strengthen the growth of the Faith at the grass roots have included greater focus on the institute process and working with tutors, multiplying core activities, and identifying neighborhoods for special teaching focus.

The Council's efforts to strengthen the growth of the Faith at the grass roots this year have included:

- Greater focus on the institute process and working with tutors to enhance their abilities to offer study circles that are spiritually transformative experiences for their participants.
- Encouraging an increasingly greater outward orientation among believers.
- Supporting the friends' individual and collective direct teaching efforts.
- Enhancing the collaboration of institutions and agencies in cluster settings.
- Multiplying core activities maintained by those engaged in the institute process.
- Identifying neighborhoods for special teaching focus.
- Promoting awareness of the culture of learning called for by the House of Justice.

In all these endeavors, Auxiliary Board members in our region have continued to lead the way in encouraging, guiding, accompanying, and collaboratively serving with believers, institutions, and agencies.

Seeking ways to further respond to the directive of the House of Justice for Regional Councils to work for the progress of the Faith in "close collaboration with the Local Spiritual Assemblies" in their regions, with the encouragement of Counselor Navid Serrano pairs of Council members and Auxiliary Board members

Impressive numbers of youths participated in summer projects designed to develop their inherent capacities and to provide them with experience serving as teachers of children and animators of junior youth groups.

met with dozens of Local Spiritual Assemblies to consult on ways they and their members can significantly facilitate and foster the continued growth of the Faith in their areas in ways that will, as the House of Justice hopes, “bind the institutions of the Administrative Order further together in collaboration, as all strive to reinforce, each in accordance with its evolving functions and responsibilities, the mode of learning that has become a prominent feature of the community’s functioning.” These meetings also fostered opportunities, in the localities that were visited, for Council members to accompany friends in their work in the field.

Throughout 2010–11, the Council continued to hold a variety of gatherings across the region to enhance the functioning of Area Teaching Committees and their members. The many hours of devoted service given by the friends serving on these key cluster agencies continues to strengthen the foundation of programs of growth in the Northwestern States.

Regional Training Institute

In pursuit of its continuing goal of strengthening the institute training process, our region’s Dawn-Breakers Training Institute gave focused attention to youth development and service. Impressive numbers of youths participated in summer projects designed to develop their inherent capacities and to provide them with experience serving as teachers of children and animators of junior youth groups. Afterward, wherever youths arose to spearhead community-building processes in neighborhoods around the region, they created exciting new dynamics that spurred on the growth of the Faith in their home clusters.

The training institute also placed special emphasis on advancing the junior youth spiritual empowerment program in the Northwest. Over the past year, as more youths began serving as animators of junior youth groups, a good number arose to become junior youth coordinators in their home clusters, and several were able to receive training organized by the national Junior Youth Desk. One young believer in Oregon, who took a year off from college to serve as a junior youth coordinator, has been especially successful in her efforts to involve growing numbers of junior youths from the greater community. One of her junior youth groups was among seven youth programs to win a “Spirit of Unity” award from a local civic Peace Institute, along with a \$500 check to “continue their peace efforts and to create practical acts of peace”! In a letter expressing its admiration for this achievement, the National Spiritual Assembly encouraged this junior youth group to utilize the funds it had been awarded “to further its valuable services to the surrounding community.”

Summary and prospects

Considering the past year, and more especially the significant steady growth of the Faith in the Northwestern States over the Five Year Plan now ending, the Council knows believers in this region are immensely grateful for the bounties Bahá’u’lláh has showered upon all our humble endeavors to serve Him. Remaining reliant upon His sustaining grace and blessings, and sustained by our love for Him, we eagerly look forward to ever-increasing opportunities to collaborate with ready and waiting souls in all our communities so that together we can play our parts in building the peaceful, just, and unified World Order He has envisaged.

Regional Bahá'í Council of the South Central States

Unity of vision

As believers in this region strove during 2010–11 to internalize the concepts so powerfully expressed in the Universal House of Justice's messages of Ridván 2010 and December 28, 2010, a new clarity of vision began to emerge in the South Central States. In June 2010, the Council hosted members of the Auxiliary Boards, coordinators and staff at the Magdalene Carney and Martha Root Regional Training Institutes, and a few Area Teaching Committee secretaries and cluster institute coordinators at a regional gathering to study and reflect on the Ridván 2010 message.

Two similar meetings are planned for April 2011 in Florida and Texas, where we will study together the December 28 letter and consult on how to translate this

Although enrollments in the region have decreased from the previous year, we are more effectively aligning our teaching and consolidation processes with all aspects of the guidance from the Supreme Body and senior institutions of the Faith.

Stages of advancement in the South Central Region as of 3/30/2011

'A'-stage clusters

Birmingham area, AL
Limestone/DeKalb Cos., AL
(Huntsville area)
Little Rock area, AR
Springdale area, AR
Broward Co., FL
Emerald Coast, FL (Pensacola area)
First Coast, FL (Jacksonville/St. Augustine area)
Gainesville, FL
Lee Co., FL
Marion Co., FL
Melbourne, FL
Miami-Dade, FL
Orlando, FL
Palm Beach, FL

Pasco/Hernando Cos., FL
Pinellas Co., FL
Sarasota/Manatee Cos., FL
Tallahassee, FL
Tampa, FL
Baton Rouge area, LA
New Orleans area, LA
Jackson area, MS
Norman, OK
Oklahoma City, OK

Chattanooga area, TN/GA
Knoxville area, TN
Memphis area, TN/AR/MS
Nashville, TN
Amarillo area, TX
Austin area, TX
Bryan/College Station, TX
Collin Co., TX
Dallas, TX
Dallas Co. NE, TX

Dallas Co. SW, TX
Denton Co., TX
El Paso area, TX
Fort Bend/Brazoria Cos., TX
Harris Co., TX (Houston)
Rio Grande Valley, TX
San Antonio Area, TX
Tarrant Co., TX (Fort Worth)

'B'-stage clusters

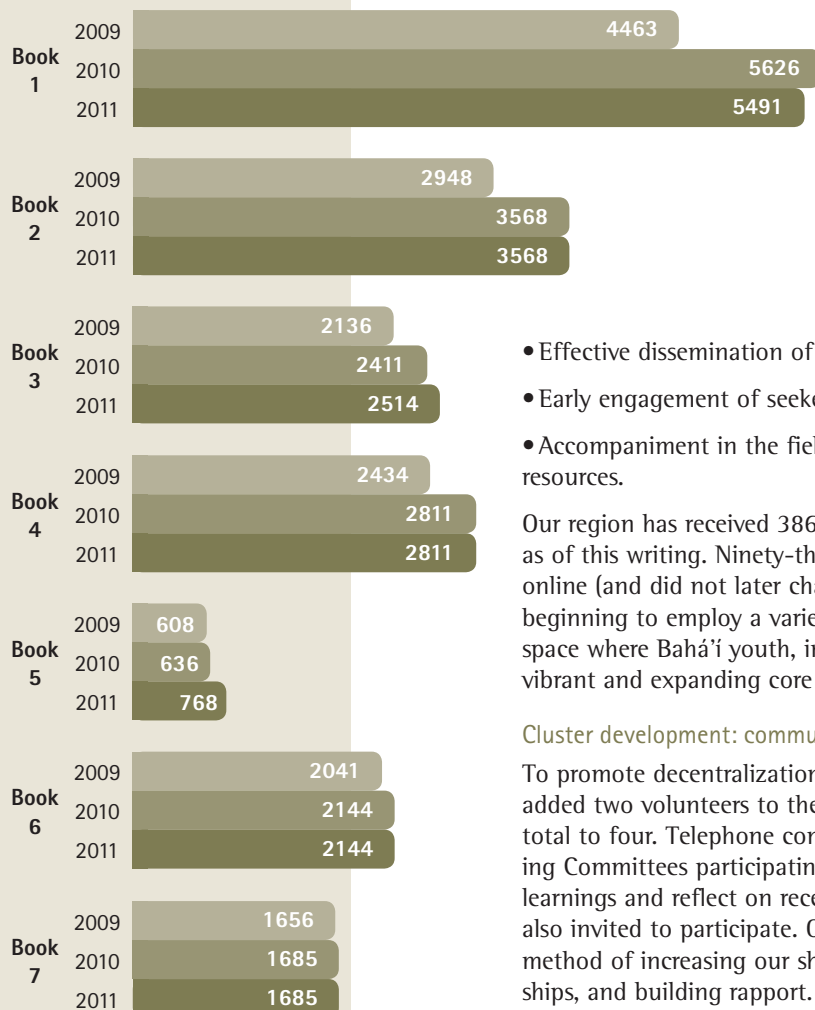
Washington/Baldwin Cos., AL
Daytona, FL
Montgomery Co., TX
Tyler area, TX

'★C'-stage clusters

Lamar/Bibb Cos., AL
Keys, FL
Polk, FL
St. Lucie, FL
Lafayette, LA
Biloxi/Gulfport, MS
Tulsa, OK
Eastern Tennessee
Marshall/Franklin Cos., TN
Corpus Christi, TX
Lubbock, TX
San Angelo, TX
Victoria, TX
Waco, TX

We are beginning to employ a variety of media to create a space where Bahá'í youth can share the excitement of their core activities.

Ruhi course participation, 2009–2011



guidance into action at the cluster level.

Expansion and consolidation

Although enrollments in the region have decreased from the previous year, we are more effectively aligning our teaching and consolidation processes with all aspects of the guidance from

the Supreme Body and senior institutions of the Faith. Bahá'í teachers are increasingly engaging in meaningful spiritual conversations that lead to an invitation for souls to join with us in the spiritualization of their neighborhoods through the core activities. This has added promising new dimensions to the teaching work, as

many more believers step into this evolving arena, find their place in the Plan, and walk shoulder to shoulder to advance the process of growth.

As illustrated in the chart at the top of page 25, when enrollments and registrations in the South Central region during the previous Five Year Plan are compared with those achieved during the Plan now drawing to a close, an increase of 54 percent can be seen. Regarding expansion and consolidation, the Council has chosen to focus its efforts on three key areas:

- Effective dissemination of learning across the cluster.
- Early engagement of seekers and new believers in core activities.
- Accompaniment in the field of action to build capacity and increase resources.

Our region has received 386 inquiries through the Seeker Response System as of this writing. Ninety-three percent of those who declared their faith online (and did not later change their minds) have been enrolled. We are beginning to employ a variety of media—including Facebook—to create a space where Bahá'í youth, in particular, can share the excitement of their vibrant and expanding core activities and invite their friends to participate.

Cluster development: community building in the neighborhoods

To promote decentralization of the field work, during 2010–11 the Council added two volunteers to the Cluster Development Office staff, bringing the total to four. Telephone conferences, each with three to four Area Teaching Committees participating, were held in February and March to share learnings and reflect on recent guidance. Auxiliary Board members were also invited to participate. Our initial assessment is that this is a promising method of increasing our shared understanding, strengthening relationships, and building rapport.

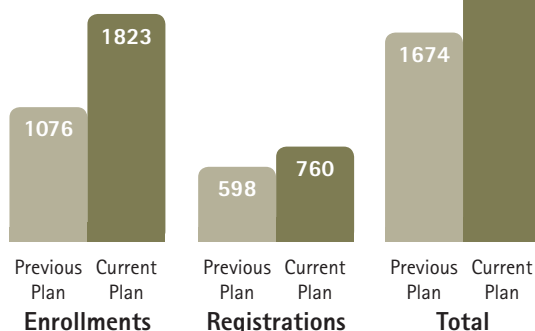


A few key learnings and observations:

- In clusters concentrating on establishing multiple core activities, we are beginning to glimpse the early stirrings of transformation. Generally, because the friends are developing genuine relationships there, it is in such neighborhoods that people from the resident population are coming forward to serve.
- During the planning phase, when teaching teams, children's class teachers, junior youth program animators, and study circle tutors meet separately and learning is captured and shared, more cohesive planning for the next cycle results.
- Wherever there is close collaboration between the cluster agencies, a unified "cluster consciousness" alive to the vision of the Plan emerges, and work at the grass roots flourishes.

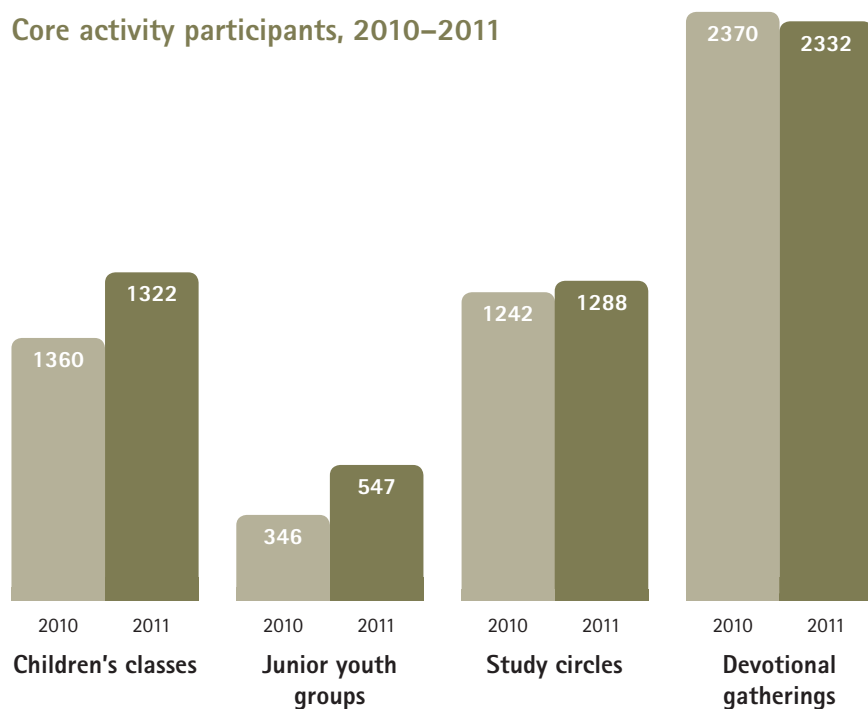
In light of the Universal House of Justice's call for a significant increase in programs of growth in the new Five Year Plan, the Council contacted Local Spiritual Assemblies, registered Bahá'í groups, and tutors in "C"-stage clusters in the region to learn more about the number of trained resources in their clusters and their engagement with core activities. Approximately 30 percent have responded so far, providing us with insights into areas where we had little or no information. In a pilot project, five emerging clusters in this group will be visited initially. The goal is to empower these friends to evaluate where they are now on the continuum and

Enrollments and registrations, comparing previous (2001–2006) and current (2006–2011) Plans



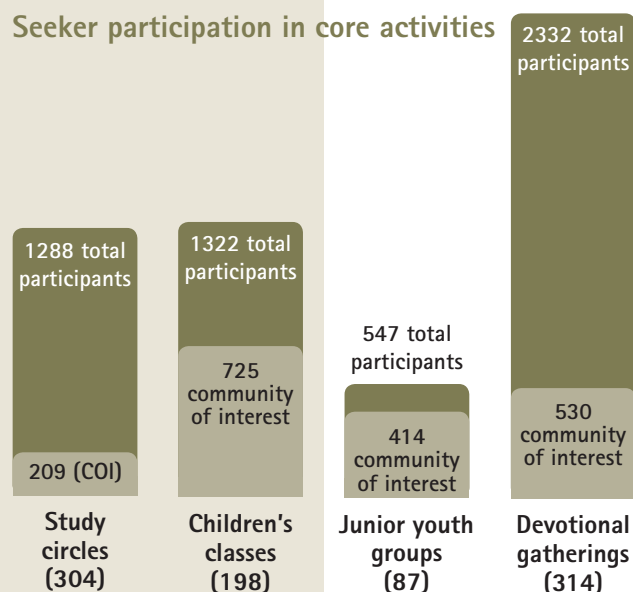
In clusters concentrating on establishing multiple core activities, we are beginning to glimpse the early stirrings of transformation.

Core activity participants, 2010–2011



When we convey to tutors, animators, and children's class teachers the vision of neighborhood development—which goes well beyond simply having study circles, junior youth groups, or children's classes—their motivation to serve increases and the institute process shows a new vitality.

Seeker participation in core activities



to consult on possible next steps in the context of the new Plan.

Training institutes

During the past year, the Magdalene Carney Bahá'í Institute, based in Florida, hosted two weeklong training institute seminars that emphasized working in the field and increasing capacity to serve in receptive neighborhoods. The Martha Root Training Institute, based in Texas, added two zonal coordinators to strengthen and decentralize the work at the grass roots. Both institutes are focusing on increasing the capacity of human resources, particularly in relation to the junior youth spiritual empowerment program and the spiritual education of children program.

The Council recently met with regional coordinators and the boards of directors for the region's two training institutes both to consult about the work in light of the recent guidance and to reflect on what has been learned. One cluster in the area served by the Martha Root Institute has some 17 junior youth groups where rich learning and progress is occurring. The Magdalene Carney Institute hosted 11 weekend tutor refreshers that engaged some 130 tutors in the revitalizing and regrouping of other tutors. The purpose of these gatherings was not to provide training but to refresh the vision of the institute process and refine the skills of tutors.

When we convey to tutors, animators, and children's class teachers the vision of neighborhood development—which goes well beyond simply having study circles, junior youth groups, or children's classes—their motivation to serve increases and the institute process shows a new vitality.

Assembly development

A series of training meetings, attended by over 750 members of Local Spiritual Assemblies, was designed to assist them to better understand their role in the Five Year Plan. Over 80 percent of the Assemblies in the region participated in these trainings. One outcome is that in several communities, centralized children's classes have been replaced by neighborhood children's classes, leading to an increase in the number of children from non-Bahá'í families participating in this core activity. Wherever Assemblies have assumed a leadership role and have learned to operate within the framework for action—for example, by supporting activities that are in harmony with the plans made at cluster reflection meetings, or by themselves taking part in the core activities and teaching efforts—growth processes acquire renewed impetus.

More recently, letters were sent to all Local Spiritual Assemblies in the region, encouraging them to study and reflect on the Universal House of Justice's letter of December 28, 2010.

Conclusion

The Council is immensely grateful to the members of the Continental Board of Counselors serving the United States, the National Spiritual Assembly, Auxiliary Board members, Regional Training Institutes, and cluster agencies for their support and encouragement, all of which has greatly assisted in propelling the advancement of the South Central region. With hearts filled with eager anticipation, we now look forward to vigorously pursuing the goals of the new Five Year Plan.

Regional Bahá'í Council of the Southeastern States

Enhancing community-building capacity

The Regional Bahá'í Council of the Southeastern States continued to see steady progress in the region during 2010–11 in advancing the Five Year Plan's first essential movement—the movement of individuals through the full sequence of Ruhi courses. As a result, an increasing number of human resources has been raised up at the grass roots to help sustain and further accelerate the second movement of the Plan—the advancement of clusters from one stage of growth to the next. These new resources have become engaged in the four core activities and have been mobilized in the work of direct teaching of the Faith.

During the course of the Plan, the number of those trained to serve as Ruhi Institute tutors in the Southeast increased by 81 percent. Further, the mobilization rate of tutors increased from 13 to 21 percent of the total. As shown in Chart 1 (page 28), the number of study circles in the region increased by an impressive 198 percent, while the total number of participants in these gatherings grew by 61 percent. The number of non-Bahá'í participants in study circles increased by a remarkable 256 percent. The Council has every confidence that the Regional Training Institute is striving at all levels to learn about the qualitative progress needed

We are convinced that continued and systematic learning will take place as a result of ongoing institute seminars aimed at building the capacity of cluster institute coordinators.

Stages of advancement in the Southeast Region as of 3/30/2011

'A'-stage clusters

Washington, DC
Central Delaware, DE
Northern Delaware, DE/MD
Metro Atlanta, GA
Cobb/Douglas Cos., GA
Gwinnett/North Fulton Cos., GA
North of Atlanta, GA
S. Fulton/Fayette/Clayton Cos., GA
Savannah area, GA
Kentuckiana, KY/IN (Louisville area)
Baltimore, MD
Howard Co./Laurel, MD
Montgomery Co., MD
Prince Georges Co., MD
Salisbury, MD
Central Mountains, NC
Charlotte area, NC/SC
Northern Mountains, NC
Triad, NC (Greensboro / Winston-Salem)
Triangle, NC (Raleigh-Durham)
Berkeley/Charleston Cos., SC
Greater Columbia, SC

Georgetown/Horry Cos., SC
Greenville/Spartanburg, SC
Pee Dee, SC
Upstate Foothills, SC
Charlottesville, VA
Fairfax Co., VA
Loudoun Co., VA
NoVA East, VA (Arlington / Alexandria)
Richmond, VA
Roanoke, VA
South Hampton Roads, VA

'B'-stage cluster

Greater Augusta, GA/SC

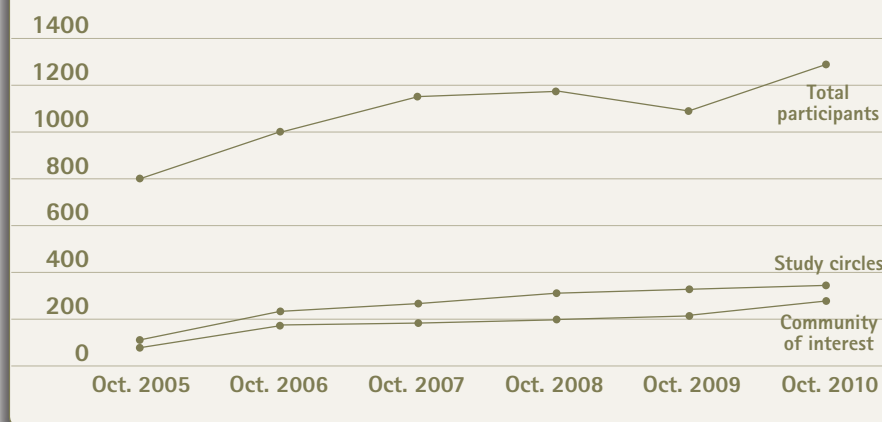
'★C'-stage clusters

Beaufort area, SC
Greater Orangeburg, SC

Regional Bahá'í Councils

Over the course of the Plan, the Southeast's rate of growth increased by 61 percent. The increase was equally shared between adult and youth enrollments and the registrations of junior youths and children.

Chart 1: Growth in study circles

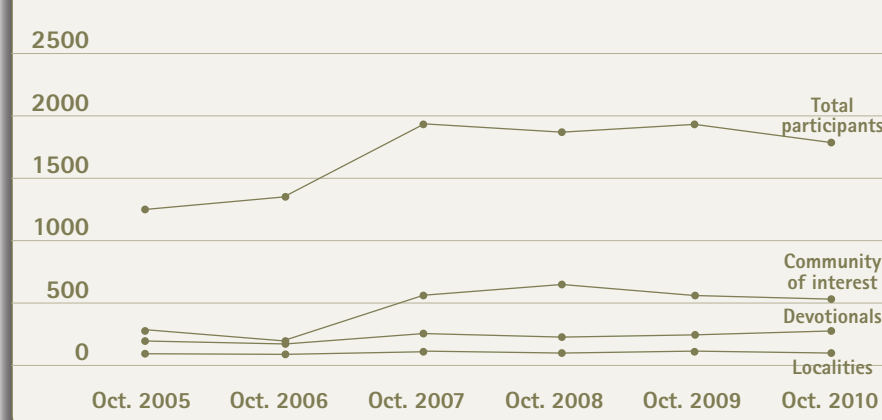


for—as the Universal House of Justice has expressed it—“sustained quantitative gains.” We are further convinced that continued and systematic learning will take place as a result of ongoing institute seminars aimed at building the capacity of cluster institute coordinators.

“The capacity to shape a pattern of life distinguished for its devotional character,” in the Supreme Body’s words, has also gained momentum. As Chart 2 shows, the number of regular devotional gatherings in the region has increased by 45 percent since the beginning of the Plan. The number of localities holding devotionals increased by 40 percent, while the average number of participants increased by 46 percent. Finally, the average number of non-Bahá’ís participating in devotional gatherings increased by an impressive 97 percent.

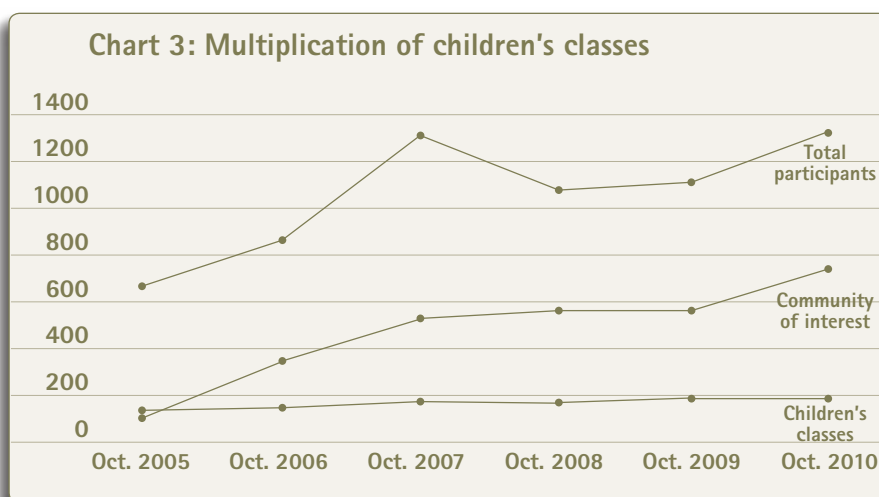
During the same period, a very promising increase—at 572 percent (see Chart 3, page 29)—has been made in the number of neighborhood children participating in the neighborhood children’s classes being held in the region. It is worth noting that while children from non-Bahá’í families comprised only 17 percent of all participants in such classes at the beginning of the Plan, current participation is at 56 percent. And the total number of children’s classes has increased by 46 percent.

Chart 2: Progress in devotional gatherings



As shown in Chart 4 (page 30), junior youth empowerment groups have seen the most striking gains, with their numbers increasing by 387 percent and with over one-third of the increase occurring during 2010–11. The total number of participants in these groups who are not registered as Bahá'ís has increased from 22 to 500—an increase of 2,200 percent! The proportion of the total number of junior youth group participants who are not registered Bahá'ís rose from 11 to 72 percent.

Over the course of the Plan, the Southeast's rate of growth increased by 61 percent. The increase was equally shared between adult and youth enrollments and the registrations of junior youths and children. Although there was a decline in growth in the region over the past two years, the Council recognizes that cluster agencies are simultaneously involved in learning how to weave together multiple lines of action for their intensive programs of growth, are further developing and refining their direct teaching skills, and are making efforts to understand the importance and experience the sacred nature of teaching vis-à-vis the community-building process.



In reviewing and reflecting on these trends, the Council feels it has much to be grateful for, noting especially the sacrifices the friends are making to serve the Cause with perseverance and to the best of their abilities. The Council is also deeply grateful to those who have chosen to leave their homes to pioneer to clusters where trained resources were needed. Between May 2009 and April 2010, 13 homefront pioneers settled in the Southeast.

Enhancing the capacity of cluster agencies and Local Spiritual Assemblies

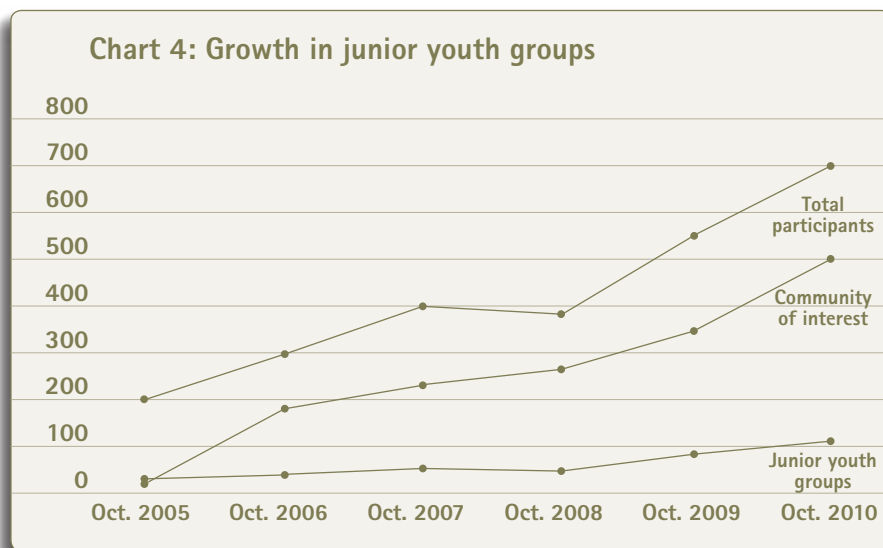
In collaboration with relevant Auxiliary Board members, the Council is continuing the training of Area Teaching Committees (ATCs) and/or core teams. In the process of training, we are using the word “accompany” in the sense conveyed in the Universal House of Justice’s Rīdván 2010 message:

A word that is being endowed with new meaning.... It signals the significant strengthening of a culture in which learning is the mode of operation, a mode that fosters the informed participation of more and more people in a united effort to apply Bahá'u'lláh's teachings.

Cluster agencies are learning how to weave together multiple lines of action, and are making efforts to understand the importance and experience the sacred nature of teaching vis-à-vis the community-building process.

We are certain the increasing capacity of Local Spiritual Assemblies will be an important factor in advancing the process of learning and in further accelerating the momentum of growth in the Southeast.

Chart 4: Growth in junior youth groups



The Council plans to hold a series of weekend seminars for the core teams in the coming months of 2011. These seminars are being planned in collaboration with the Counselor assigned to the Southeast and with the Regional Training Institute coordinator. One seminar has already been scheduled for April 2011. The Council is also encouraging ATC members to renew and strengthen the quality of their tutoring skills.

The Council has agreed to continue with a “Phase 2” of seminars that have been ongoing for clusters with intensive programs of growth in place. The focus of these Phase 2 seminars will be on strengthening the institute process and on fostering learning from the Assemblies’ plans to mobilize the friends in their communities. Our inspiration comes from this passage from the Supreme Body’s Riḍván 2010 message:

Evolving relationships among administrative structures have brought the Local Spiritual Assembly to the threshold of a new stage in the exercise of its responsibilities to diffuse the Word of God, to mobilize the energies of the believers, and to forge an environment that is spiritually edifying.

As we begin work on a new Five Year Plan, we are certain the increasing capacity of these sacred institutions will be an important factor in advancing the process of learning and in further accelerating the momentum of growth in the Southeast.

WLGI-FM Radio Bahá'í

During the year 2010–11, Radio Bahá'í maintained reasonable consistency in its operations as the Regional Bahá'í Council of the Southeastern States considered the station's path forward in the context of the Five Year Plan and guidance from the Universal House of Justice's Rīḍván 2010 message.

Human resources

The Council is focusing on development of the station's strategic approach to programming in line with the plans of the Faith, which is to include working with Bahá'í communities in the area, as well as with the wider community and with like-minded organizations. To facilitate this, a general manager has been named to serve alongside the two long-standing staff members, who will continue to work as operations manager and programming manager.

Over the year, this small staff performed programming, production, administrative, minor technical and engineering work, and on-air duties, with assistance as needed from a part-time on-air announcer. A staff member travels to conferences and workshops to keep up to date on technical, management, regulatory, and legal issues that affect broadcasting operations. As part of the learning process, an additional programming person and a program development committee were in place for part of the year.

Programming

WLGI staff has developed and maintained solid programming that appears to be generally well-received, based on feedback from the public and the Bahá'í community. The normal 24-hour program cycle includes:

- Approximately 21 hours of music, some by Bahá'í performers.
- 48 minutes of informational Bahá'í programming.
- 36 minutes of Bahá'í prayers.
- 96 minutes of public service programming. This includes 30- and 60-second spots and two-minute mini-programs.
- On Saturdays, the hour-long *Parents Journal*.

Music includes traditional and contemporary jazz, gospel, R&B, and pop. The relatively small percentage of vocal music is carefully screened for positive, uplifting lyrical content that reinforces Bahá'í themes such as love, peace, unity of mankind, and the equality of men and women. Bahá'í programming focuses on various aspects of the Faith, such as "Principal Figures of the Faith," "What Bahá'ís Believe," and "Bahá'í Prayers." Public service programming includes pre-produced announcements on such topics such as health and well-being, community service, poverty, aging, education, and literacy, as well as announcements from local

The station's strategic approach to programming, in line with the plans of the Faith, is to include working with Bahá'í communities in the area, as well as with the wider community and with like-minded organizations.

*W*LG1 staff often supports local nonprofit organizations by writing, recording, and airing public service spots.

churches and community organizations. WLGI staff often supports local nonprofit organizations by writing, recording, and airing spots.

Most programming is pre-produced, except for the afternoon drive shift, which is presented live most days of the work week.

Engineering/technical

The station continues to contract with a radio engineer for routine maintenance checks and troubleshooting and has consulted with the facilities manager at Louis Gregory Bahá'i Institute. Damage from lightning strikes necessitated replacement of some equipment at the tower site.

Regional Bahá'í Council of the Southwestern States

At Riḍván 2010, 59 intensive programs of growth had already been established in the Southwestern States, a full year ahead of schedule in meeting the Five Year Plan goal for the region set in 2006. During 2010–11, the concluding year of the Plan, the region continued to build on its achievements by extending to other spheres of operation the same mode of learning that has come to characterize its expansion and consolidation efforts: action, reflection, and consultation.

Raising human resources

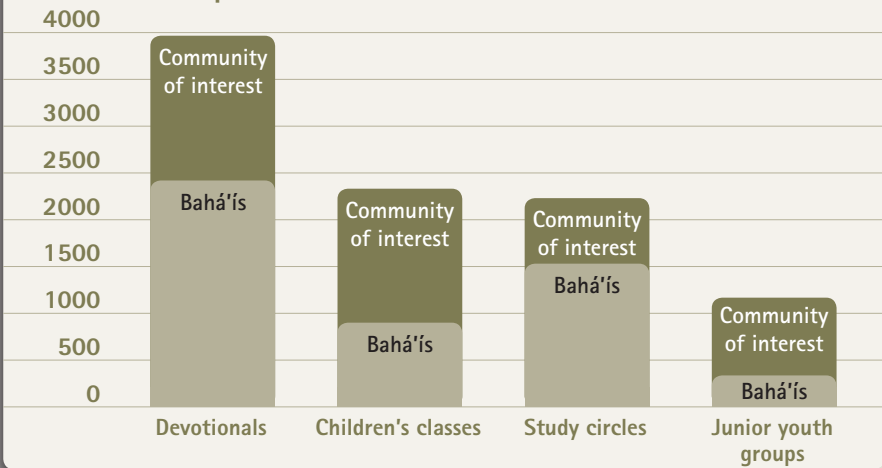
Earlier in the Five Year Plan, the Council spent time and energy in coordination with the Counselor and Auxiliary Board members redirecting the efforts of some of the friends toward service directly connected to the institute training process. The results since then have confirmed the value of this focused attention. Development of human resources in the region has steadily gained momentum.

More than 10,000 souls in the Southwestern States have completed the first Ruhi Institute course, raising their “capacity to shape a pattern of life distinguished for its devotional character,” in the words of the Universal House of Justice’s December 28, 2010 letter. The number of potential Bahá'í children’s class teachers doubled to 5,000, making it possible to “respond wholeheartedly to the spiritual aspirations of the young.” The region has greatly augmented its capacity to assist “junior youth in navigating ... a crucial stage of their lives” with an elevenfold increase in the number of junior youth program animators.

Training in Ruhi Book 2, *Arising to Serve*, has raised the skills of more than 6,000 friends to enter into meaningful and distinctive conversations “with people of varied backgrounds and interests and to undertake with them an exploration of reality that gives rise to a shared understanding of the exigencies of this period in human history.” This rise in skills and consciousness has made the multiplication of the four core activities across the region a reality, with a total of 10,000 participants. Some 3,000 friends across the Southwestern region are capable of serving as tutors of study circles, making it possible to sustain the pyramid of human resources.

More than 10,000 souls in the Southwestern States have completed the first Ruhi Institute course, raising their “capacity to shape a pattern of life distinguished for its devotional character.”

Participation in the core activities



The learning site for junior youth spiritual empowerment programs provided effective training of junior youth coordinators and facilitated regular visits to target clusters.

Junior youth spiritual empowerment

From among the 59 clusters with intensive programs of growth, 14 priority clusters were selected to receive additional support in advancing the frontiers of learning with a higher level of intensity.

The learning site for junior youth spiritual empowerment programs in the East Valley cluster of Arizona served these 14 priority clusters in a variety of ways. It provided effective periodic training of junior youth coordinators. It facilitated regular visits to target clusters to accompany junior youth coordinators and animators in the formation of junior youth groups in focus neighborhoods, as well as subsequent reflection gatherings for animators. The process of establishing or maintaining at least 20 junior youth groups in each priority cluster has been an area of intense action and learning.

Significant progress has also been made in multiplying the number of junior youth groups in diverse settings. A sizable number of young people from varied backgrounds have been trained and deployed as animators. Introducing the Bahá'í-inspired junior youth program to charter schools, Boys and Girls Clubs, and colleges and universities has been another area of attention in the last year of the Plan. Some 900 young people from the wider community are participating in junior youth programs across the Southwestern States.

Youth initiatives

Special youth initiatives have been instrumental in facilitating the movement of young people through the institute process and engaging them in service to the Plan. Over the past five years, these youth initiatives have systematically raised a pool of dedicated teachers of the Cause who are now in the forefront of the Plan, empowering junior youths and training other youths to serve as animators of junior youth groups.

Through a process of planning, action, and reflection youth initiatives have become more dynamic and responsive to the needs of youth from diverse backgrounds possessing varied skills and capacities.

A number of youths have arisen to serve for up to a year as homefront pioneers in selected neighborhoods. Acting as junior youth spiritual empowerment program coordinators and animators, they work shoulder to shoulder with the resident population, accompanying souls to raise their spiritual and material well-being.

Homefront pioneers

Homefront pioneers were instrumental in winning the goal of 59 advanced clusters and strengthening intensive programs of growth. A full third of the 60 homefront pioneers were youths. Their deployment, orientation, and ongoing support continue to be an important area of learning.

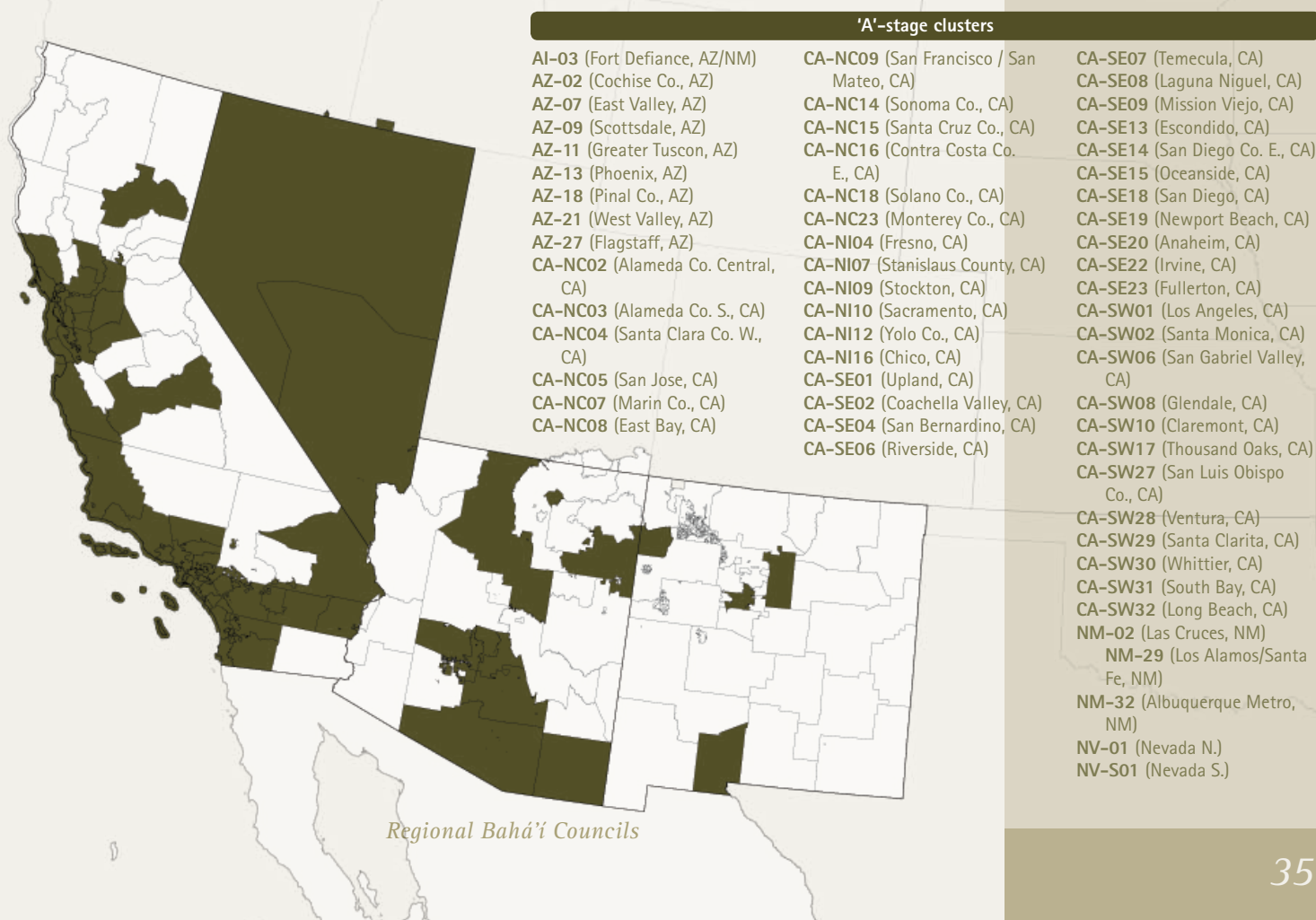
Institute seminars

Two institute seminars were held in the region, attended by coordinators from 14 participating clusters: one in August 2010 on Ruhi Book 1, and a second in January 2011 on Ruhi Book 2. Their impact has been vital in uplifting the vision of the institute coordinators and expanding the base of the pyramid of human resources in the clusters. Results include an increase in the effectiveness of tutors in creating a spiritual atmosphere in study circles as well as an increase in the accompaniment of participants to engage in the practices.

Clearer understandings have emerged relevant to both those courses: of ways an Area Teaching Committee and cluster institute coordinator can collaborate to promote devotional gatherings as a path of service stemming from Ruhi Book 1, and

A full third of the 60 homefront pioneers were youths. Their deployment, orientation, and ongoing support continue to be an important area of learning.

Stages of advancement in the Southwest Region as of 3/30/2011



Cluster-level inter-institutional gatherings have proved effective in creating a real sense of collaboration between the agencies of the Faith engaged in expansion and consolidation.

of the significance of Ruhi Book 2 as a basis for community building and nurturing a spirit of service.

Inter-institutional gatherings

Cluster-level inter-institutional gatherings—attended by Local Spiritual Assemblies, cluster institute coordinators, the Area Teaching Committee, and Auxiliary Board members—have proved effective in creating a real sense of collaboration between the agencies of the Faith engaged in expansion and consolidation. Throughout 2010–11, this effort has continued to foster greater engagement of Assemblies and their members in programs of growth.

The Bahá'í Fund

The number of Assemblies and individuals contributing directly to the Regional Fund has increased significantly since the start of the Plan. To support accelerated expansion and consolidation, the Council has set a goal, by Ridván 2012, to secure participation in the Regional Fund from 76 percent of the 284 Local Spiritual Assemblies in the Southwestern States—above and beyond their support of the National Fund. In addition, Assemblies continue to generously provide the financial support needed for teaching activities in their respective clusters.

Intensive programs of growth

During 2010–11, accumulated experience across the region lifted the consciousness of the friends beyond simply multiplying the number of core activities within a cluster. In clusters with intensive programs of growth, the friends learned to recognize receptivity by identifying pockets of neighborhood populations willing to build spiritual community through core activities.

One area of focus has been development of teaching teams committed to establishing strong bonds of loving friendship with the people they serve in receptive neighborhoods, accompanying these souls on their paths to improving their spiritual and material lives. Cluster institute coordinators and Area Teaching Committees in the three sub-regions were systematically accompanied in the field of action by Regional Training Institute coordinators and the Council's Teaching Office. The assistance and encouragement of the Auxiliary Board members and the close collaboration and spirit of unity among the cluster agencies has been instrumental in the advancement of clusters.

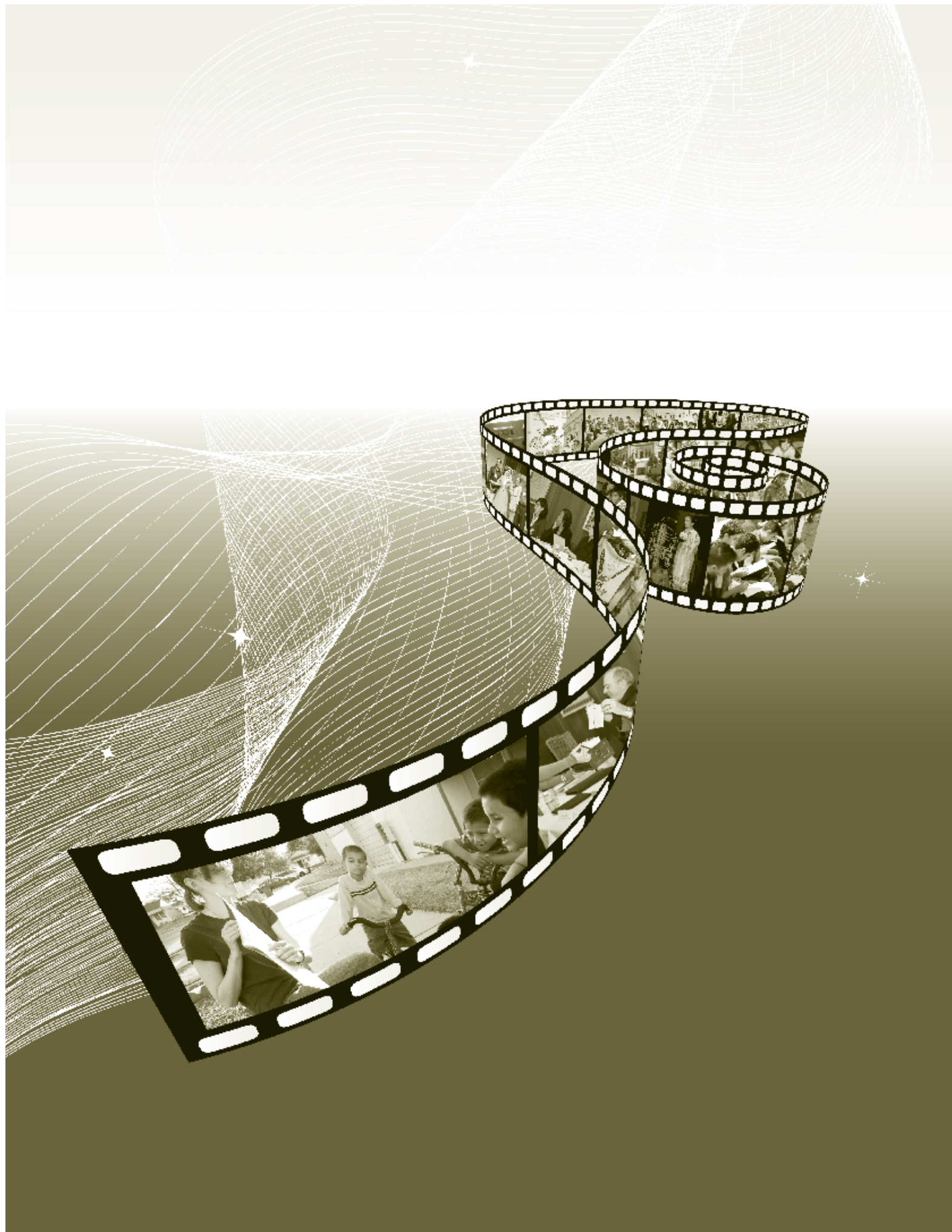
Teaching teams have been learning to introduce the training institute to the wider community as a divine instrument with “limitless potentialities” for raising spiritual neighborhoods and building a new civilization.

To persevere, to maintain a humble posture of learning, to maintain a reflective mode, to work systematically, to accompany others, and to work collaboratively have continued to be among the primary areas of intense learning for institutions, agencies, and teachers in the Southwestern States throughout the year.

The Five Year Plan closes much the way it began in 2006—with planning propelled by new guidance flowing from our Supreme Institution and with new hopes buoyed by a shared sense of achievement, mindful of the challenges yet to come.

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Office of External Affairs

The activities of the Office of External Affairs (OEA) continued to be dominated by events related to the trial and post-trial incarceration of the former Yárán, the seven-member national ad hoc coordinating group for the Iranian Bahá'í community.

These activities included defending the Bahá'ís in Iran with U.S. government officials, including the White House, the State Department and Congress; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); think tanks; traditional media outlets; and social media networks. The staff also worked on other human rights issues, the advancement of women, sustainable development and climate change, as well as the work of representing the U.S. Bahá'í community at the United Nations.

There were two staff changes during the year. In October 2010, Mr. Anthony Vance became director of the office, replacing Ms. Kit Bigelow, who had retired at the end of June 2010. In February 2011, the media officer, Ms. Ariel Olson Surowidjo, departed and was replaced by Ms. Ginous Alford. Ms. Kate Fernandez Brown, the administrative director, went from half-time to full-time.

To better coordinate efforts with the Office of Communications, staff members of both offices met in Evanston, Illinois, in November 2010 to map out areas for closer coordination and cooperation. Most notable was agreement reached to develop pages on the national website devoted to the major discourses in which OEA is engaged at the national level.

Prevalent social discourses were discussed with senior Bahá'í officials in New York in July 2010 and in March 2011, and an outline of a plan to move forward was developed.

Defense of the Bahá'ís

During 2010–11, the American Bahá'í community acted on all fronts to enlist the support of the U.S. government in defense of the Bahá'ís in Iran.

Soon after reports were received indicating that each of the former members of the Yárán had been sentenced to 20 years in prison, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton issued a statement on August 12, 2010 condemning the Iranian government's action:

Freedom of religion is the birthright of people of all faiths and beliefs in all places. The United States is committed to defending religious freedom around the world, and we have not forgotten the Bahá'í community in Iran. We will continue to speak out against injustice and call on the Iranian government to respect the fundamental rights of all its citizens in accordance with its international obligations.

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- 46 ...Office of Communications
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As of April 1, 2011, Local Spiritual Assemblies reported meetings with 27 percent of House of Representatives members or their staff (116 of 435) and 41 percent of Senators or their staff (41 of 100).

Congressional outreach

Soon after Secretary Clinton's statement, the American Bahá'í community engaged in a systematic campaign to meet with members of Congress to call their attention to the plight of the Bahá'ís in Iran and further engage their support.

As of April 1, 2011, Local Spiritual Assemblies reported meetings with 27 percent of House of Representatives members or their staff (116 of 435) and 41 percent of Senators or their staff (41 of 100).

As a result of this outreach, Congress introduced a number of resolutions in support of the Bahá'ís in Iran. Senator Sam Brownback introduced S. Res. 694 in the 111th Congress on December 3, 2010. In the 112th Congress, Senators Mark Kirk and Richard Durbin and Representatives Robert Dold and Daniel Lipinski introduced S. Res. 80 and H. Res. 134, "condemning the Government of Iran for its state-sponsored persecution of its Baha'i minority and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights." In addition, on March 30, 2011, some 41 members of Congress sent an open letter to Secretary Clinton urging her to "continue to speak out" against the persecution of Iranian Bahá'ís and to "advocate for the release of those who have been wrongfully imprisoned."

Responses by the UN

The United Nations General Assembly adopted its 23rd resolution on the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran in December 2010. In coordination with the government of Canada, which introduced the resolution, the U.S. government played a critical role in ensuring passage of the resolution. In addition, on March 24, 2011, the UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution by overwhelming majority vote calling for a special rapporteur to monitor Iran's compliance with international human rights standards. Staff members of the Office of External Affairs were involved in many meetings with the U.S. government regarding these multilateral efforts.

U.S. government statements

On the occasion of Naw-Rúz 2011, President Barack Obama mentioned the Bahá'í community in his video address to the people of Iran.

Secretary Clinton again spoke out about the Bahá'í community in a statement on February 23, 2011 about the "deteriorating human rights situation in Iran." She noted that "Bahá'ís and other religious minorities continue to be subjected to arbitrary arrests and prosecutions, harsh sentences and unsafe prison conditions" and called on "Iran to free all political prisoners and persecuted minorities."

The State Department continued to prominently mention the Bahá'ís in its 2010 International Religious Freedom and Human Rights Reports. In the case of the 2010 International Religious Freedom report, the Shrine of the Báb was included on its front cover. Reports are available at:

- www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/
- www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/index.htm

Visit by family members of Bahá'í prisoners to Washington, D.C.

On February 7–11, 2011, four U.S.-based family members of imprisoned Bahá'ís visited Washington, D.C., to assist in advocacy efforts on behalf of their loved ones. Meetings were scheduled with members of Congress, the State Department, and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, and a news conference was held in collaboration with Amnesty International at its Washington office.

Their visit was covered in articles by CNN, Agence France-Presse (AFP), *The Huffington Post*, Beliefnet, and the Religion News Service. The AFP story was reposted by several sites including Yahoo. A live broadcast February 10 on BBC Persian Television included a three-minute interview with Mr. Iraj Kamalabadi, whose sister is Ms. Fariba Kamalabadi, one of the imprisoned former members of the Yárán. (Later that day, Mr. Kamalabadi said his sister's husband told him on the phone that he saw the broadcast.) The family members were also interviewed in Persian by Radio Free Europe (Radio Farda), Voice of America (Persian Service) radio, and BBC Persian, which also did a recorded radio segment.

In addition, on March 31, 2011, Dr. Farzad Kamalabadi, another brother of Ms. Kamalabadi, spoke about her at a reception attended by some 150 human rights activists and congressional staff on Capitol Hill for the Congressional International Religious Freedom Caucus.

Participation in human rights and religious freedom events

The Office of External Affairs continued to participate in numerous meetings throughout the year involving coalitions of nongovernmental organizations advocating for human rights and religious freedom. On October, 26, 2010, at a conference on Capitol Hill entitled "The Plight of Minorities in the Middle East: What the U.S. Should Do," Mr. Shastri Purushotma made a presentation. On March 1, 2011, at a briefing organized by the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission entitled "Religious Minorities in the Middle East and South and Central Asia," Ms. Alford made a presentation.

Support for Bahá'ís in Iran using new media

Throughout the year, Office of External Affairs staff provided support to initiatives by individual Bahá'ís to utilize new media in defense of the Bahá'ís in Iran. One such initiative was the "Angels of Iran" website (www.angelsofirean.com). Another was a video interview conducted with Professor Cornel West of Princeton University, who spoke out in support of the Bahá'ís in Iran and also praised the contributions of the American Bahá'í community to race relations in the United States. Clips from the latter interview will be posted on the Internet shortly after this annual reporting period.

Media relations—Iran

The trial sessions of the seven Bahá'í leaders, which continued through summer 2010 with sentencing handed down in early fall, received national media attention. The conclusion of the trial, the harsh sentences (which were changed from 20 years to 10 years and back to 20 years in the span of six months), the transfer of the seven prisoners to Gohardasht Prison, and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's statement were topics of news coverage by print, Internet, radio, and video news coverage by outlets including CNN's "Belief Blog," the *Los Angeles Times*' "Babylon & Beyond" blog, *The Miami Herald*, Radio Free Europe, Religion News Service via *The Huffington Post* and the *Houston Chronicle*'s "Believe Out Loud" blog, Agence France-Presse, America.gov, Iranian.com, and *Foreign Policy*'s "The Cable" blog.

In May 2010, the second anniversary of the imprisonment of six of the former Yárán generated media coverage as well in *The Washington Times* and Radio Free Europe. The March 2011 third anniversary of the imprisonment of Ms. Mahvash Sabet, the seventh former member of the Yárán, also triggered coverage on blogs and in national newspapers. (Also please note the February 2011 media coverage detailed above under the heading "Visit by family members of Bahá'í prisoners to Washington, D.C.")

On February 7–11, 2011, four U.S.-based family members of imprisoned Bahá'ís visited Washington, D.C., to assist in advocacy efforts on behalf of their loved ones.

Ms. Roxana Saberi, a journalist who shared a prison cell in Tehran's Evin Prison with Ms. Sabet and Ms. Kamalabadi, two of the imprisoned Bahá'í leaders, generated substantial coverage in the media about the plight of the Bahá'ís.

Other noteworthy media coverage—ranging from traditional to online publications to social media outlets—related to various issues such as President Obama's Naw-Rúz greeting, statements from the U.S. Department of State, the UN Human Rights Council's vote concerning Iran, the death of the wife of Iranian Bahá'í prisoner Jamaloddin Khanjani, and the destruction of 50 homes in Ivel, Iran, that belonged to Bahá'ís. Such reports appeared in NPR's *Weekend Edition Saturday*, Interpress News, *The Kojo Nnamdi Show*, CBS News' *Washington Unplugged*, PRI's *The World*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *National Review Online* blog "The Corner," and Aslan Media. *The Huffington Post* published an opinion article submitted by Mr. Vance, director of external affairs, concerning arson attacks on Bahá'í homes in Rafsanjan.

Ms. Roxana Saberi, a journalist who shared a prison cell in Tehran's Evin Prison with Ms. Sabet and Ms. Kamalabadi, two of the imprisoned Bahá'í leaders, generated substantial coverage in the media about the plight of the Bahá'ís. In connection with a promotional circuit for her book *Between Two Worlds: My Life and Captivity in Iran*—in which she devotes many pages to her interactions with Ms. Sabet and Ms. Kamalabadi—Ms. Saberi mentioned her cellmates on several high-profile shows, including *The Daily Show* and *Good Morning America*.

Further raising awareness about the plight of Iranian Bahá'ís, Ms. Saberi also published in national and regional daily newspapers several opinion articles about the human rights situation in Iran, sometimes specifically devoted to the seven Bahá'í leaders. Publications that ran articles include *The Washington Post* in May and August 2010, the *Chicago Tribune* in February 2011, *The Wall Street Journal* in March 2011 and Radio Free Europe's Radio Farda.

To facilitate that reporting, the OEA media officer provided news of developments in Iran to key journalists, editors, and producers who cover Iran and human rights issues. They also maintained the National Spiritual Assembly's Iran site (<http://iran.bahai.us>), where media coverage of persecution of the Bahá'ís in Iran was made available; and the Office of External Affairs' account on the Public Information Officer Network (www.bahaipio.net), where local public information officers are kept apprised of news from Iran. Through these outlets, they sought to make available relevant and timely information, such as Secretary Clinton's statement about the sentences for the Iranian Bahá'í leaders or resolutions introduced in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, for the reference of national media and local public information officers. The outlets were also useful for linking to NGO blogs and public statements about the Bahá'ís.

Nongovernmental organizations' and scholars' support for Iranian Bahá'ís

Nongovernmental organizations continued to issue statements or otherwise speak out about the injustices against the Bahá'ís in Iran, including such groups as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Anti-Defamation League, the National Iranian American Council, and United4Iran. In addition, well-known scholars such as Dr. Reza Aslan and Dr. Cornel West added their voices to the global outcry being raised in support of the Bahá'ís in Iran.

Major public events in support of the Yárán

On April 11, 2010, over 300 people attended an event in Miami, Florida, in support of the Bahá'ís in Iran. Mr. Douglas Martin, former member of the Universal House of Justice, and U.S. Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen were the keynote speakers. On January 22, 2011, approximately 400 people attended an interfaith event in Los Angeles in support of the Bahá'ís of Iran, at which Mr. Martin was the keynote speaker.

Communications

The Office of External Affairs answered the many and varied inquiries of the U.S. Bahá'í community. As part of the National Spiritual Assembly's Secretariat, OEA provided guidance to Local Spiritual Assemblies and individuals on matters related to external affairs, such as participation in political activities and voting; participation in interfaith activities; involvement with the UN; Middle East issues; contacting government officials, national organizations, or the media; and responding to the National Spiritual Assembly's call to support the Bahá'ís in Iran, such as support for the forming of delegations to visit with members of Congress and associated visits with legislators.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Office of External Affairs continued its involvement in the Campaign for U.S. Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), a broad-based coalition of child rights, religious, academic, and legal organizations.

United Nations

Mr. Carl Murrell, the National Spiritual Assembly's UN representative, serves as a member of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York (NGO CSW/ NY), and as co-chair of its subcommittee on violence against women. In this capacity, the UN representative helped plan the side event "Realizing the Elimination of Violence Against Girls" at the UN 55th Commission on the Status of Women. He also organized an event in support of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence and UNIFEM's Say NO-UNiTE: End Violence Against Women campaigns. He and Ms. Carolina Vásquez, U.S. UN Office administrative assistant, were members of the Bahá'í International Community's delegation to the Commission.

In the area of advancement of women, the UN representative contributed to planning of a briefing on women's human rights, gender equality, and development in preparation for the Substantive Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Throughout the year he also participated in programs with UN agencies and with various civil society networks. Two such occasions were the Women of Color Network conference on domestic violence and the National Call for Unity in recognition of National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Mr. Murrell represented the National Spiritual Assembly at the 63rd UN Department of Public Information NGO conference, "Advance Global Health: Achieve the MDGs," held in Melbourne, Australia. He facilitated participation by Bahá'í representatives from Australia and New Zealand, and led an informal discussion on "What is Religion?" and the balance of service in the core activities with pressing professional responsibilities.

Two other topics of focus were youth and people of African descent, in keeping with the UN launch of the International Year of Youth in August 2010 and of the International Year for People of African Descent in December 2010. The UN representative also attended the UN event to mark the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures and the UN Alliance of Civilizations Third Global Forum "Bridging Cultures, Building Peace" in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He is also serving on the bureau of the Committee of Religious NGOs.

The UN representative completed 17 years of service as co-chair of the UN Values Caucus, which hosted regular meetings, community discussions, and off-the-record coffees for UN ambassadors and high-level UN officers. Among other events, the Values Caucus and UNEP co-sponsored the panel "Many Species. One Planet. One

The National Spiritual Assembly's UN representative serves as a member of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York; represented the National Spiritual Assembly at the 63rd UN Department of Public Information NGO conference; and served as co-chair of the UN Values Caucus.

The National Spiritual Assembly continued more than two and one-half decades of involvement in promoting U.S. ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and was part of a coalition that worked on congressional legislation to eliminate international gender-based violence.

Future,” in commemoration of World Environment Day.

The U.S. UN Representative’s Office also supported the strategic alliance between UNA-USA and the UN Foundation, by which UNA-USA became a subsidiary of Better World Fund. The representative also participated in the UNA-USA annual meeting in June.

At the invitation of an individual in the Hartford, Connecticut area, the UN representative presented a workshop on the Institute for Global Prosperity paper on the equality of women and men. In October he spoke on the same subject as the keynote speaker at the Zonta Club New York monthly membership meeting. He also spoke about the Millennium Development Goals at the Women’s Missionary Society of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 22nd Annual Conference.

The U.S. UN Office administrative assistant coordinated announcements of UN-related initiatives via social media.

Advancement of women

The National Spiritual Assembly continued more than two and one-half decades of involvement in promoting U.S. ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Leadership Conference, the National Women’s Law Center (NWLC), Citizens for Global Solutions (CGS), the YWCA, and the ACLU continue to lead the CEDAW task force. Ms. Gleibys Buchanan, NGO liaison for women’s issues, served on the task force as well as on its advocacy and grassroots outreach subcommittees. In November 2010, Senator Richard Durbin convened a hearing in the Judiciary Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law. The National Spiritual Assembly joined over 80 organizations supporting ratification in jointly submitting testimony to the committee. The Assembly also joined over 100 organizations in signing on to the CEDAW coalition statement.

The National Spiritual Assembly was also part of a coalition of more than 50 organizations that worked on congressional legislation to eliminate international gender-based violence. The NGO liaison for women’s issues was a member of the working group to pass I-VAWA (the International Violence Against Women Act). After the 2010 midterm congressional elections, the environment in the House of Representatives changed significantly and one of I-VAWA’s lead co-sponsors retired. Therefore, the I-VAWA working group decided to pursue a strategy in 2011 that would delay reintroduction of the bill and assess what aspects of it can be achieved through administrative action within the authority of the current administration and with funding already appropriated for related purposes.

The National Spiritual Assembly also promoted the full participation of women in international development assistance programs, with particular focus on the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), a U.S. government entity that provides funding to developing countries based on their ability to rule justly, invest in their people, and encourage economic freedom.

Involvement with the Women, Faith and Development Alliance (WFDA), launched in April 2008, was continued. The WFDA joined international religious women’s networks together with international development organizations to advocate for women’s empowerment as a key priority for investment in development. This past year, the faith subcommittee of the WFDA, to which the NGO liaison for women’s issues was a representative, continued to focus on encouraging Congress to place gender concerns at the forefront of foreign assistance reform.

The National Spiritual Assembly continued support for programs that addressed domestic violence. The NGO liaison for women's issues attended meetings and advocacy activities of the Interfaith Domestic Violence Coalition, a network of national faith-based organizations supporting national legislation to assist survivors of domestic violence.

Sustainable development

Mr. Peter Adriance, NGO liaison, continued to work with other organizations on a broad range of issues related to sustainable development.

In May, he co-led the Bahá'í International Community's delegation to the 18th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. He prepared and delivered a plenary statement on behalf of the NGO Major Group and organized a panel on transforming a culture of consumerism to a culture of sustainability. He also hosted at the Bahá'í UN Offices two U.S. government delegation briefings for civil society and a meeting of the Stakeholder Forum International Advisory Board.

The NGO liaison participated in extended meetings at the United Nations in May, January, and March in preparation for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2012. In January he attended an international workshop to draft principles for a green economy. In March he helped organize a meeting to advance North American stakeholder preparations for UNCSD.

Serving on the Governing Board of the International Environment Forum (IEF), the NGO liaison helped to initiate planning for its 14th annual conference to be held in Hobart, Australia, in 2011 on the theme "Ethical Responses to Climate Change." Among other activities, the organization launched a new website, supported the work of the Bahá'í International Community at various international meetings, and welcomed several new members from the U.S. and elsewhere during the year, bringing total membership to more than 300 in nearly 70 countries.

As secretary of the U.S. Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development and co-chair of its Faith Sector team, the NGO liaison worked to advance the discourse on faith and environment. In September, he participated in the first Federal Sustainability Education Summit, sponsored by the Department of Education in Washington, D.C. In October, he held workshops for junior youth at Bosch and Louhelen Bahá'í Schools on the theme "Environmental Stewards: Champions of Justice!"

In November 2010 the NGO liaison joined the Interfaith Advisory Committee for Interfaith Power and Light's annual Preach-in on Global Warming (February 11–13, 2011). He prepared materials, coordinated outreach efforts, and responded to inquiries from Bahá'í communities. Also in November he met with leaders from several faith-based organizations to consult on trends in faith-inspired environmental initiatives.

In December 2010 at the Bahá'í Conference on Social and Economic Development in Orlando, Florida, he helped organize and facilitate a pre-conference seminar and gave a keynote address on religion and environment.

The National Assembly's NGO liaison co-led the Bahá'í International Community's delegation to the 18th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and acted as secretary of the U.S. Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development.

In January, the National Spiritual Assembly consolidated the Office of Communications, The American Bahá'í, and the Media Services department into a unified communications agency with the responsibility to develop content and communications strategies for a range of audiences.

Office of Communications

The principal tasks of the Office of Communications include producing news and information for a range of audiences, such as the general public, seekers, the community of interest, and members of the Bahá'í community; developing relationships with the national media; offering training and support for the network of local public information officers; developing and managing the national Bahá'í presence on the Internet; and encouraging and supporting individual, local Bahá'í community, and cluster initiatives on the Internet. Other important areas of the office's work include the development of organization-wide identity and graphic design standards; digital media asset management; and crisis communications.

Consolidation and integration of communications functions

In January 2010, the National Spiritual Assembly consolidated the Office of Communications, *The American Bahá'í*, and the Media Services department into a unified communications agency with the responsibility to develop content and communications strategies for the range of audiences identified above.

This new agency is considered part of the Faith's external affairs operation, along with its sister office in Washington, D.C., which oversees the Faith's diplomatic relations and contributions to public discourse. Staff from the Washington office and the communications agency met at the Bahá'í National Center in October 2010 to discuss synergies and collaboration among our various lines of action, including diplomatic efforts, contributions to public discourse, media relations, Web presence, and media production. These face-to-face consultations will continue biannually.

Another significant administrative adjustment was the creation in summer 2010 of a new, independent Office of Web Development, which provides research, development, and technical support for all aspects of the Faith's national presence on the Web.

Web presence

One of the top priorities of the office continues to be the improvement of the Faith's overall presence on the Web, including improvement of official sites at the national, cluster, and local levels, creating a seamless experience for seekers and members of the public who investigate the Faith online, and the encouragement of well-conceived and focused individual initiative online. The following specific lines of action were undertaken during 2010–11:

- The Office of Web Development created a new Web application framework for the Bahá'í National Center, adding a new level of functionality to national Bahá'í websites, including member authentication and role-based delivery of content.
- The national public website (www.bahai.us) was redesigned on this platform to

consolidate content from the existing public website, *U.S. Bahá'í Newsreel*, the online edition of *The American Bahá'í*, and the national administrative website in such a way that members of the general public, seekers, the community of interest, and Bahá'ís can easily find the information they need.

- A high priority was placed on developing engaging multimedia content for the public and seekers, including a bimonthly package of features and multimedia content, and content for the quarterly public e-newsletter, *U.S. Bahá'í News*, which has more than 8,000 subscribers. A video library is now available (media.bahai.us) in addition to official Bahá'í channels on YouTube (www.youtube.com/BahaiNationalCenter) and Vimeo (www.vimeo.com/usbahai).
- A national online directory of Bahá'í localities was created (find.bahai.us), using the official contact information for Local Spiritual Assemblies and registered Bahá'í groups from the national membership database. This map-based directory can be searched by state or locality name or by ZIP code and is closely integrated with the Seeker Response System to ensure quality control of follow-up to seeker inquiries.
- To systematically encourage the proliferation of high quality cluster/locality websites, the office is creating a “cluster website incubator.” The Drupal-based system will enable the office to provide a turnkey solution for local websites, with a customizable template that comes preloaded with many of the tools and functions required by local sites. The sites can be hosted on a national server or ported to a local host if desired. A system is now being beta-tested by a handful of local Bahá'í communities.
- Social media continue to be an area of active interest and learning for the office as a means to reach new audiences and expand the penetration of our content. Links back from the office’s Facebook and Twitter accounts, as well as blogs on Beliefnet and PeaceNext, now account for a significant portion of the traffic to the Faith’s official websites.

Media relations

The area of media relations has two basic components: work with national media and training and support for public information officers (PIOs) to conduct local media relations.

The office provided ongoing mentoring and support to the PIOs through an online social network (www.bahaipio.net) which, in addition to providing an efficient means of communication from the office to the PIOs, allows the PIOs to create personal profiles and share news and information with each other and with the office.

In September 2010, the office had an information booth at the Religion Newswriters Association (RNA) annual convention for the seventh consecutive year. The convention continues to be an important avenue for the office to develop relationships with key reporters and expose them to the Faith. A highlight this year was the participation of Rainn Wilson via a live video conference.

During 2010–11, the office developed a relationship with *The Huffington Post* religion editor, which led to the recruitment of several Bahá'í writers who have become regular contributors to this prominent blog.

As a result of relationships built over the course of the office’s long-term participation in the Religion Communicators Council (RCC), the Bahá'í Faith was invited to join Odyssey Networks, the nation’s largest interfaith coalition focused on produc-

One of the top priorities of the office continues to be the improvement of the Faith’s overall presence on the Web, including improvement of official sites at the national, cluster, and local levels.

Call on Faith, a mobile video app available on the iPhone, Blackberry, and Android platforms, now includes a branded Bahá'í channel with new video content to be released monthly.

ing media that reflects spiritual values. One of Odyssey's projects is "Call on Faith" (www.callonfaith.com), a mobile video app available on the iPhone, Blackberry, and Android platforms, which now includes a branded Bahá'í channel with new video content to be released monthly.

The office also continued to field requests and respond to misrepresentations, inaccuracies, and omissions in the national media regarding the Faith. The office responded to general inquiries from national organizations and the general public and maintained the accuracy of entries about the Faith in reference works.

Organizational identity and style guide

The Office of Communications has worked for some time to develop a style guide for the Bahá'í national organization that includes both graphic design standards and editorial guidelines to ensure a consistent and dignified identity across different print and online media. With regard to graphic design standards, the office has nearly completed the roll-out of new letterhead and business card designs for the Bahá'í National Center. The star image used in our identity package received federal trademark protection this year. Attention was given to protecting the integrity of the trademarked image, applying it consistently to the Faith's publications and websites, and extending its use to off-site agencies, such as the permanent Bahá'í schools.

Digital asset management

The Office of Communications continued to develop the Bahá'í National Center's digital media asset library—also known as the Bahá'í Heritage Project—containing photo, audio, and video assets. An intensive effort to digitize slides, photos, audio-tapes, films, and other archival media assets is under way. Priority is being given to the preservation of older assets that may be deteriorating and assets that support communications priorities. The office is working to add a Web interface to the media collection, so that different user groups—including Bahá'ís, media outlets, and the general public—will be able to keyword search and download selected assets. A beta site was launched (heritage.bahai.us). The collection of assets pertaining to 'Abdu'l-Bahá is receiving special attention in anticipation of 2012 commemorations of the centenary of His visit to America.

The American Bahá'í

The American Bahá'í, a bimonthly magazine published by the National Spiritual Assembly, produced, during 2010–11, six issues reaching the tens of thousands of Bahá'í households in our national community. The publication continued to carry out its crucial missions: to disseminate guidance from the senior institutions of the Faith providing focus and direction for our activities, to inspire and encourage the national community to carry forward the Divine Plan, and to share news of how the friends are acting to further the Cause and to benefit humanity.

During the year, the magazine staff phased out the old online edition of *The American Bahá'í* (<http://tab.usbnc.org>), which had been launched in April 2005. To maintain the service provided by the old site, staff worked with sister offices at the Office of Communications, Media Services, and Web Development on an integrated site offering articles, video, and audio content for the public, seekers, media, and the national Bahá'í community. For the first time, that site makes most of the content produced by *The American Bahá'í* available to Web users without requiring a login.

Each issue of the magazine contained a major story package on a theme inspired

by the Ridván 2010 message, including: international pioneering; the role of children's classes in building community; spiritual conversations and teaching the Faith; action, reflection, consultation, and study; and junior youth spiritual empowerment. In addition, the magazine covered such major events as the Bahá'í National Convention, and it shared stories of growth, learning, service activities and capacity-building in the Bahá'í community. Major messages and selected articles were also presented in Persian and Spanish. A new regular feature, "Fundamentals for believers," was introduced, intended to acquaint new Bahá'ís with some basic principles and laws of the Faith, as well as resources for learning more. The magazine also increased the space it devotes to analysis and historical perspective on the tasks of the current Plan.



The staff cherishes its continued collaboration with Bahá'í institutions and with agencies of the National Spiritual Assembly, including the National Teaching Office, Treasurer's Office, Office of International Pioneering, Office of Education and Schools, Persian-American Affairs Office, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, *Brilliant Star*, Board of Trustees of Huqúqu'lláh, and Bahá'í World News Service. We are also grateful for the regular Spanish translations generously provided by volunteers.

Bahá'í Media Services

The Bahá'í Media Services department works in partnership with other offices and agencies of the National Spiritual Assembly to create a more informed American Bahá'í community—one that is continually challenged and invigorated by understanding of and commitment to the global plans of the Universal House of Justice for the growth and development of the Faith.

During 2010–11, Media Services focused on three principal lines of action:

- Media product production.
- Development of external media resources.
- Media asset management.

Media product production

U.S. Bahá'í Newsreel

During the year, the Media Services team wrote and produced two new editions in the *U.S. Bahá'í Newsreel* series—volume 19.2, which focused on communities raising the level of service in their own neighborhoods, and volume 19.3, in which Bahá'ís discussed how grassroots community-building activities relate to the process of building peace.

Each issue of the magazine contained a major story package on a theme such as: international pioneering; the role of children's classes in building community; spiritual conversations and teaching the Faith; action, reflection, consultation, and study; and junior youth spiritual empowerment.

Two new editions in the U.S. Bahá'í Newsreel series focused on communities raising the level of service in their own neighborhoods, and on how grassroots community-building activities relate to the process of building peace.



Special projects

U.S. BAHÁ'Í WEB MEDIA. Media Services participated in strategic planning and production for the new Bahá'í public website (bahai.us), contributing, through video production, to the Community Life and the Welcome sections.

THE AMERICAN BAHÁ'Í ONLINE EDITION. Media Services produced eight videos for the online edition of *The American Bahá'í* on a variety of topics, including: community development; the spiritual education of children and junior youth; youth serving the Plan; and spiritual conversation and friendship.

OFFICE OF ASSEMBLY DEVELOPMENT. The department partnered with the Office of Assembly Development to develop an interactive training program for Local Spiritual Assembly secretaries aimed at improving their skills in developing agendas and taking minutes.

BAHÁ'Í NATIONAL CONVENTION. Media Services provided audiovisual support and video production and editing for Convention web postings. The department also produced audio CDs of Convention highlights for the delegates' use in presenting reports to Bahá'í communities in their electoral units.

ANNUAL CHORAL MUSIC FESTIVAL. Media Services provided video and audio production and coordinated the audio post-production for this well-attended annual event at the Bahá'í House of Worship.

BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTER. Media Services completed production of a special visitor's video for the Bahá'í World Center, entitled *Vineyard of the Lord*.

HUMAN RIGHTS. The department collaborated with the Bahá'í International Radio Service (BIRS) and the local Bahá'í communities of Wilmette and Evanston, Illinois, to shoot and edit video for the Human Rights Day Forum on the persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran, cosponsored by Amnesty International and held at Northwestern University in December 2010. Stories were released in both Persian and English.

RACE AMITY. Media Services is producing a short documentary on the first Race Amity Conference held in Washington, D.C., in 1921. The documentary will be

shown at a public event sponsored by the National Race Amity Center at Wheelock College in Boston.

CORNEL WEST INTERVIEW. In collaboration with the Office of External Affairs and the Bahá'í International Radio Service (BIRS), Media Services conducted a video interview with the distinguished Princeton University professor of African American Studies, Dr. Cornel West.

Development of external media resources

Media Services has continued to develop working relationships with independent Bahá'í media producers that the National Spiritual Assembly can call on to meet the communications needs of a growing American Bahá'í community.

The department attended a series of meetings with the media professionals group at the 2010 Bahá'í Conference on Social & Economic Development in Orlando, Florida. The result of the meetings was positive, and participants expressed their determination to find ways to serve the needs of media in the context of the goals of the Five Year Plan and the needs of the Bahá'í National Center.



Media asset management

The Bahá'í Heritage Project—assets of which are located in the Media Services offices—is a collaboration between the Office of Communications, Media Services, and Soft Computer Company, a Bahá'í-owned business. The project's goal is both to preserve valuable media assets and to make them available to users in digital form. Since April 2010, the Heritage Project has digitized more than 63,000 media assets, including audio, video, photographs, clip art, and print documents.

Conclusion

Media Services looks forward to the new reporting year beginning at Ridván 2011, during which it will be focusing some of its efforts on the upcoming commemorations of the centenary of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to North America.

Since April 2010, the Bahá'í Heritage Project has digitized more than 63,000 media assets, including audio, video, photographs, clip art, and print documents.

The first annual Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity (ISGP) seminars for Bahá'í university students were held in August and December 2010 and will continue over the next four years as a way of accompanying undergraduate students through four years of university studies.

Public Discourse Desk

The Public Discourse Desk was established in April 2010 by the National Spiritual Assembly in collaboration with the Bahá'í World Center. The desk's purpose is to create spaces in which the friends may build capacity to participate in the prevalent discourses of society. A variety of spaces are being created for this purpose.

The first annual Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity (ISGP) seminars for Bahá'í university students were held in August and December 2010 and will continue over the next four years as a way of accompanying undergraduate students through four years of university studies. As the matter is articulated on the ISGP website:

The purpose of these intensive seminars is to raise the consciousness of youth about the importance of engaging in action and discourse directed towards social change; to develop their capacity to reflect, to analyze, and to learn from action; to explore elements of a conceptual framework for contributing to the advancement of civilization; to provide them with tools to understand and analyze the culture in which they are immersed as well as the content of the university courses they are studying; to help them assume ownership of their education; and to assist them in their efforts to acquire the kind of knowledge that will enable them to live fruitful, productive and meaningful lives.



A series of coherence seminars, initiated by the Universal House of Justice in 2008, were carried forward this year in six cities. The purpose of these one-day seminars, conducted between September and December 2010, was to raise consciousness among the friends of the coherence among three areas of Bahá'í endeavor: expansion and consolidation, social action, and participation in the discourses of society. Participants discussed the reciprocal and reinforcing nature of our endeavors and, noting that advancement in one area reinforces the others, explored connections between these ideas and the existing activities of their clusters.

Although the desk is in an early stage of development, it strives to learn from and share with the friends the methods, approaches, and instruments that can best be employed to contribute to the discourses of society. A coherent and systematic process will yield these fruits in the coming years.

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The Persian-language media reported the repression of Bahá'ís in greater depth and breadth than ever before, leading to a more heightened awareness of the Faith and demonstrating the Bahá'ís' innocence.

Persian Public Information Desk

The Persian Public Information Desk was established in 2009 to both advance the Faith's presence and monitor its coverage in the Persian-language media. In the course of the year 2010–11, the office successfully carried out the following activities:

- Prepared 27 Bahá'í International Community (BIC) press releases in Persian and distributed them to the Persian-language media.
- Prepared for publication hundreds of news items received from Iran about the persecution of that country's Bahá'ís.
- Arranged for interviews with the Persian-language media dealing with the persecution of the Bahá'ís in Iran and presenting the principles of the Faith.
- Provided guidance to individuals seeking to present the Faith in the Persian-language media.
- Developed materials for use in the mass media, especially in defense of the Iranian Bahá'í community and in removing common misconceptions about the Faith among Iranian people.
- Organized and managed workshops reaching out to Iranians in such spheres of social action as human rights, advancement of women, social justice, and social and economic prosperity.
- Engaged with like-minded Iranian organizations in mutual efforts to promote the above-mentioned themes.

Coverage of the Faith in the Persian-language media

Radio and television

During 2010–11, persecution of Iran's Bahá'ís intensified. Many more Bahá'ís were subject to arbitrary arrest, detention, and imprisonment than in recent years. The Persian-language media reported the repression of Bahá'ís in greater depth and breadth than ever before, leading to a more heightened awareness of the Faith and demonstrating the Bahá'ís' innocence. A range of radio and television interviews have been broadcast on BBC Persian, Voice of America (VOA) Persian, Radio Farda, Radio France International (RFI) Persian, Deutsche Welle (DW) Persian, Radio Zamaneh, and other programs.

Websites

The Iranian government intensified its media attacks on the Faith during 2010–11. This has only generated more publicity about the Faith both in Iran and abroad. The Internet has been a significant vehicle for breaking down barriers, correcting misunderstandings, and responding to such attacks. Despite their government's rigorous attempts to filter Bahá'í sites, Iranians have been able to bypass this

censorship and receive news and information about the principles of the Faith and the persecution of Bahá'ís. Among the most familiar sources, we have observed a significant growth in the amount of content favorable to Bahá'ís on YouTube and in articles in Gooya, Rooz-online, Zamaneh, the BBC site, the VOA site, the Radio Farda site, and many others.

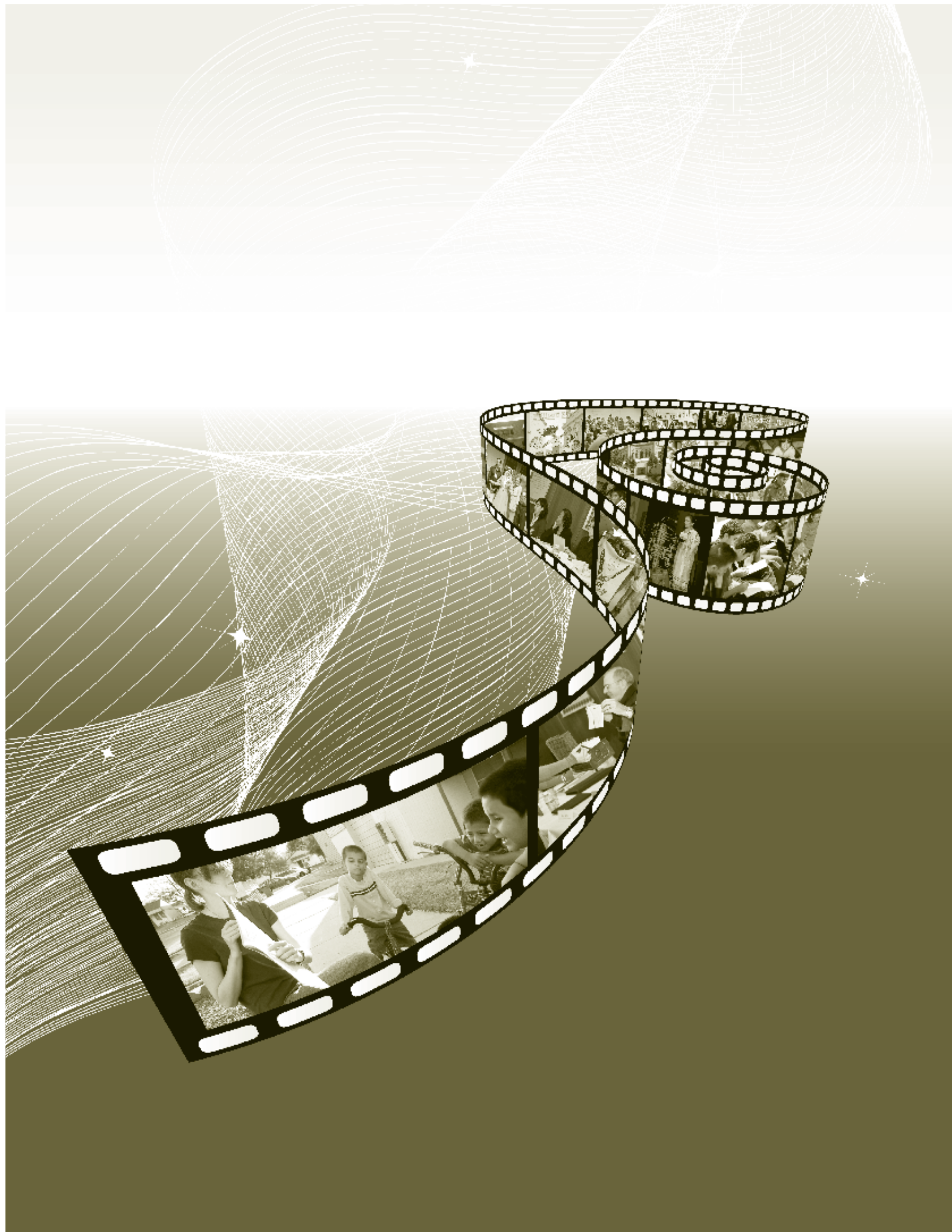
News and press releases

These achievements in both the Persian- and English-language media have been propelled by a significant number of reports and press releases issued by the Bahá'í International Community and prepared by the desk for presentation in the Persian-language media. During 2010–11, 27 official press releases were sent to the Persian-language media.

Workshops

Several workshops have been held in different parts of the country offering Iranian Bahá'ís an opportunity to come together and study a framework for engaging in meaningful discourse with their Iranian sisters and brothers. This initiative, at once consistent and coherent with other avenues of action in the Bahá'í world, has provided a forum for clarifying the meaning of noninvolvement in politics, learning approaches to the removing of discriminatory practices, exploring the meaning of justice and power, reflecting on the culture of learning, and practicing a humble posture of learning.

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Over the course of the year 2010–11—the final year of the second in a series of Five Year Plans intended to carry us to 2021 and the conclusion of the first century of the Faith’s Formative Age—the American Bahá’í community, “the Chief and appointed executors of the Master Plan of the Center of His Covenant,” achieved many laudable successes on the financial front, building on victories realized during the previous four years.

One such success lies in the significant strides made in the development of the regional branches of the National Fund. The ability of the Regional Bahá’í Councils and Regional Training Institutes to effectively manage the resources placed at their disposal clearly advanced to a new level, and we are heartened by the enthusiasm and maturity the members of these relatively new institutions have evinced as they assume greater responsibility for the financial stewardship of their important work.

Progress in assisting the friends to understand their financial responsibilities came about through expanded Fund education initiatives, as the Mybahaifund.us website was introduced and multiple Treasurer’s Forums were offered. A special study focusing on young adult believers was commissioned, and this has yielded new insights into the attitudes and thinking of this demographic group. Budgetary restraint at each level of the community, whether national, regional, or local, was impressive. And despite the gloom of economic uncertainty prevailing in society, contributions to the Funds of the Faith were substantial.

At Ridván 2010, joy pervaded our community as we contemplated, as the Universal House of Justice described it, “this astounding achievement, this signal victory” of 1,500 intensive programs of growth in the world. In the afterglow of this momentous occasion, we began anew our efforts to place at the disposal of the Faith’s institutions the financial resources necessary for maintaining their operations. At the same time, we initiated movement toward the establishing of financial reserves for the future that could be at the ready when growth and progress require capital not planned for within the operations budget. At this writing, \$22.3 million toward the \$28 million National Fund goal has thus far been received—and we are still counting! A great spirit of enterprise and sacrifice is alive in the country and many believers and communities are assiduously striving to deliver the funds necessary to win the goal. We are humbled by and deeply grateful for this outpouring.

The agenda for the Bahá’í community outlined in the Supreme Body’s message of December 28, 2010 is stimulating in the community a reconsideration of the level of our commitment and support on many fronts; this includes our ensuring that the lifeblood of the Cause continues to flow unimpeded by secondary and material considerations. Believers across the socioeconomic spectrum represented in our community are adding their share to the harvest of funds being brought in and placing it on the altar of Bahá’í sacrifice.

63 ...Financial highlights

64 ...Statement of financial position

65 ...Statement of activities

66 ...Notes to financial statements

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With the dramatic rise in the number of programs of growth in the country, Fund education is becoming increasingly vital, ensuring that our activities to bring the message of Bahá'u'lláh to waiting souls can continue without interruption.

We must further acknowledge the growing number of resources supporting the operations of the National Spiritual Assembly being offered through in-kind gifts of professional services and equipment, as well as through professional consulting services. Here the friends' generosity is making it possible to fulfill needs in our systems where it could not otherwise be done, had we to fund them through the budget. Our thanks for these acts of service are offered with the same sincerity and deep sense of gratitude as our thanks to those making cash contributions.

As we step forward embracing the objectives of the new Five Year Plan, we anticipate in the years ahead a new enthusiasm and broader support for the National Bahá'í Fund. With an increase in teaching the Faith directly, a concomitant increase in Fund contributions can be projected. The same spiritual forces affect all and uplift all.

Fund education

The past five years have seen significant advances in the education of the believers about the Fund and its importance as a sacred institution of our Faith. With the dramatic rise in the number of programs of growth in the country, Fund education is becoming increasingly vital, ensuring that our activities to bring the message of Bahá'u'lláh to waiting souls can continue without interruption.

In order to further Fund education at the grass roots, local treasurers—who are the friends' first source of information on and contact with the Fund and who interact regularly with the community—have become a principal focus of the work of the Treasurer's Office. As the Bahá'í community has been experiencing a change in culture, this has included its relationship to the Funds of the Faith. Local treasurers, our local Fund educators, have played a major role in this shift. We have witnessed an advance in the level of discourse about the Fund, shown in such arenas as the National Treasurer's Forums, Treasure Chest Trainings, and visits of the believers to the Bahá'í National Center. In addition, letters have continuously poured in, telling of the friends' loving and inspiring sacrifices for the Fund.

Online contribution system

The past year saw the historic launch of an online contribution system. The system makes it possible for the friends to contribute anywhere and anytime and takes advantage of the growing trend, particularly among young people, of online financial management and banking. Several years in the making, it not only ensures contributors the highest level of security possible but also offers the friends the opportunity to contribute directly to each Fund, to give on behalf or in memory of a loved one, to access their records of giving and printable receipts, to access tools for both financial recordkeeping and spiritual reflection on one's giving, and to easily set up either a one-time or a recurring contribution. Features soon to be integrated into the system include a new ability for Local Spiritual Assemblies and registered groups to contribute and a new ability for the friends to make contributions to local Bahá'í Funds.

Mybahaifund.us

Coupled with the launch of the online contribution system was the launch of an exciting new website (www.mybahaifund.us). This regularly updated site has something for everyone—including downloads of *Liang's Adventures*; monthly Fund updates; FUNDcasts; devotional slide shows; the latest news and information

on the restoration, in Wilmette, of the Mother Temple of the West, and the construction, in Santiago, of the Mother Temple of South America; and much more. In the coming months, this site will become a portal for all things Fund related—including information and forms for treasurers, as well as news and stories for the community as a whole.

Online media

The FUNDCast series and devotional slide shows

During the Five Year Plan now concluding, a need to further engage believers, especially young people, with the Fund using multimedia initiatives became apparent, thus the FUNDCast series began. The videos in the FUNDCast series continue to be released as a way to inspire a deeper consecration to the Fund in the hearts of the believers. They are conversations with Bahá'ís around the country, who tell stories about how their connections to the Funds of the Faith both help them to connect more deeply with Bahá'u'lláh and assist them in their service to the Five Year Plan. FUNDCast videos can be viewed for inspiration either individually or in groups and are intended to facilitate discourse about the Fund and how our spiritual and material realities are intertwined. Devotional slide shows are meditative presentations of the Bahá'í writings and beautiful images set to peaceful music. The friends are encouraged to visit www.mybahaifund.us to view the most recent FUNDCasts and slide shows.

Treasurer education and outreach

The Treasurers Café

Again during this Five Year Plan, an idea was born at a national Treasurer's Forum and the Treasurers Café was the result. The Treasurers Café was created as a way for local treasurers and members of Local Spiritual Assemblies to collaborate about their service to the Fund, gain new insights and ideas, and share the learning they've acquired in the field. It is intended to be a "one-stop shop" for treasurers and has now grown to over 700 members. Various discussions can be viewed on the Treasurers Café, relating to both the spiritual and technical aspects of being a steward of the Funds.

Encouraged to join the Treasurers Café network are members of Local Spiritual Assemblies as well as treasurers and secretaries of registered groups. The friends are welcome to visit the website (<http://TreasurersCafe.bahaitreasurer.us>) to create a profile and sign up.

The Bahá'í Treasurers Bulletin

The *Bahá'í Treasurers Bulletin* (BTB) has begun its ninth year of publication, being sent out several days in advance of each Nineteen Day Feast. The past five years have seen a significant increase in the readership of the BTB, which tells us that local treasurers are engaging their community in consultations about the Fund more and more. The BTB is a helpful tool local treasurers can use to prepare for their Treasurer's Report at Feast, and includes articles, stories, and FUNDCasts, as well as the Treasurer's Notes section, which is intended to be printed out and taken to Feast. In this way, efforts are being made to fulfill the wishes of the Universal House of Justice expressed in the following excerpt:

Local Assemblies might be assisted in devising more interesting and informative ways of presenting the needs of the Fund.... The

The videos in the FUNDCast series depict conversations with Bahá'ís around the country, who tell stories about how their connections to the Funds of the Faith both help them to connect more deeply with Bahá'u'lláh and assist them in their service to the Five Year Plan.

FUNDamentals has evolved to engage in public discourse centered on the issues of spirituality and finance. Articles have explored saving for retirement, budgeting, environmental sustainability, and the Bahá'í House of Worship—and a host of other issues.

Treasurer's Report should be an exciting and stimulating part of each Nineteen Day Feast, and it would certainly be helpful if the local Treasurer had up-to-date information on the status of the National Fund.

The BTB includes a translation into Persian and Spanish of the Treasurers Notes and can be accessed anytime (www.bahaitreasurer.us).

National Treasurer's Forums

During 2010–11 there were two National Treasurer's Forums, one held in November at Bosch Bahá'í School and another in December at Green Acre Bahá'í School, bringing the total number of Forums held during this Plan to five. Treasurers from around the country gathered to share ideas and practices; learn about the technical aspects of stewardship, such as auditing and accounting procedures; consult on Fund education methods; and offer each other support. Over the years, Continental Counselors, members of the National Spiritual Assembly, representatives from Regional Bahá'í Councils, and staff from the Office of the Treasurer have shared insights with hundreds of local treasurers on the institution of the Fund, recent guidance from the Universal House of Justice, the intimate relationship between the teaching work and material support of the Faith, Fund education, accounting tools, and the principles involved in being a treasurer.

Treasure Chest Trainings

A series of one-day trainings, which are a condensed version of the National Treasurer's Forum, have been held around the country, providing the opportunity for treasurers to learn from each other and attend workshops on Fund education and the technical aspects of financial stewardship, including auditing and accounting procedures. The trainings have been held in such cities as Minneapolis, Denver, and Louisville and will continue in the new Five Year Plan.

Youth and young adults

FUNDamentals E-zine

Since its first issue in the winter of 2007, the quarterly online publication *FUNDamentals* has continued to offer readers, particularly young adults, spiritual and practical insight into managing one's finances. Begun primarily as an attempt to provide young people with tools and principles of financial literacy from a spiritual perspective, the publication has evolved, in light of the recent guidance from the Universal House of Justice, to engage in public discourse centered on the issues of spirituality and finance. Articles have explored saving for retirement, budgeting, environmental sustainability, and the Bahá'í House of Worship—and a host of other issues. To date the *FUNDamentals* site has logged nearly 40,000 views.

Creative media

Several efforts have been made over the years to develop creative media to engage young people in learning about and participating in giving to the Fund. Several young adults with filmmaking experience were approached about creating a film about the Funds for other young adults. The result was the 30-minute film *Lifeblood: Young Bahá'ís and the Bahá'í Funds*, released in 2007. Efforts have also been made to make “viral” videos, such as the Flash film *5 Reasons You Need to Know About Financial Planning*, which paired sound financial advice with quotes from the Bahá'í writings.

Children

Liang's Adventures

The *Liang's Adventures* booklet is a quarterly publication from the Treasurer's Office. It is mailed out to all registered Bahá'í children between the ages of four and nine. During the past five years, the booklet's content has gradually been adjusted to reflect the Bahá'í community's movement toward providing spiritual education for all children. This has been accomplished by incorporating elements of the Five Year Plan core activities into the booklet's stories and activities.

This booklet continues to play an important role in connecting the hearts of children to the Funds of the Faith and to service to humanity. The booklet provides stories of Liang the Lion and his friends that illustrate Bahá'í virtues related to sacrifice and generosity. Letters exchanged between Liang and children across the country testify to how this character helps the youngest members of our community develop Bahá'í identities connecting spiritual and material existence. Recently, the length of the booklet has been increased from 16 to 22 pages.

Junior youth

Arise 'zine

The *Arise* booklet is a biannual 'zine-style publication that goes out to all registered junior youth ages 10–14. The tone of this publication has shifted during the Five Year Plan. The stories, interviews, and activities it contains are being tailored to fit better with the community's learning about junior youth and junior youth groups.

Recognizing that many of the young people who join junior youth groups are not from Bahá'í families, the booklet's content has lately been tailored to reflect a more outward-oriented approach, in hopes of increasing its interest to a wider range of young people. During 2010–11, the contents of the booklet have included interviews with junior youths about their activities in service to their communities. The number of pages in the *Arise* 'zine has also increased, from 16 to 20, as the booklet has been merged with another publication designed for junior youth, *Above & Beyond*.

Volunteers

The production of several of our publications depends greatly on services provided by volunteers. We offer our heartfelt gratitude to these friends for their selfless efforts. The quality of each of the publications speaks volumes about these friends and the high level of their devotion to service to the Cause.

Financial advisors

The dedicated services of a team of valued individuals who serve as financial advisors to the National Spiritual Assembly is deeply appreciated. We offer our profound gratitude to these devoted souls for their cherished services.

Campaigns

Chilean Temple Initiative

The Bahá'í community of the United States has responded with enthusiasm to the call from the Universal House of Justice to play its part in the global effort to

Recognizing that many of the young people who join junior youth groups are not from Bahá'í families, content of the Arise 'zine has lately been tailored to reflect a more outward-oriented approach, in hopes of increasing its interest to a wider range of young people.

Both the Temple Restoration project and the construction of a new Visitors' Center have reached a number of significant milestones over the past five years. Contributions continue to be received to ensure that the Mother Temple of the West will be a source of light and spiritual sustenance for generations to come.

build in Santiago, Chile, the first Bahá'í House of Worship in South America. The community is committed to raising the lion's share of the amount needed for the project and has done so generously and sacrificially, with contributions coming in from all corners of the country and from believers of every age. To date, nearly \$15 million has been contributed. With an initial estimate for the Temple's construction of \$28 million—and with a new estimate of \$38 million as of November 26, 2010—we feel sure the community will continue to lovingly respond to this exciting and historic enterprise.

Kingdom Project

Both the Temple Restoration project and the construction of a new Visitors' Center have reached a number of significant milestones over the past five years, including completion of the Temple's terrace and many of its gardens, new fountains, reflecting pools, and handrails, as well as construction of a garden retaining wall necessary for the new Visitors' Center. Contributions continue to be received to ensure that the Mother Temple of the West will be a source of light and spiritual sustenance for generations to come.

Conclusion

As a new year and a new Plan with new opportunities for victories begins, we pray for the continued growth and development of the blessed institution of the Fund and for the achievement of the glorious spiritual destiny that awaits America, "*the land wherein the splendors of His light shall be revealed, where the mysteries of His Faith shall be unveiled, where the righteous will abide, and the free assemble.*"

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

Financial highlights • March 31, 2011 (unaudited) and April 30, 2010

	March 31, 2011 unaudited	April 30, 2010 actual
Unrestricted and restricted contributions received by the National Spiritual Assembly		
Unrestricted contributions	\$24,492,810	\$29,465,335
Restricted for the Kingdom Project	3,488,650	3,704,140
Restricted for the International Funds	256,302	262,653
Restricted for other Funds	2,126,617	2,500,999
Total contributions received	\$30,364,379	\$35,933,127
Contributions to other funds		
International Funds	\$3,317,391	\$3,571,181
Continental Fund	352,235	370,369
Chile Temple	1,011,775	1,390,310
Other Bahá'í Funds and Deputization	235,815	306,961
Total contributions to other Funds	\$4,917,216	\$5,638,821
Kingdom Project, capital expenditures and depreciation		
Kingdom Project expenditures	\$2,691,508	\$3,428,216
Green Acre expansion	1,072,499	1,629,076
Other capital expenditures	1,114,716	947,187
Total unrestricted revenues	\$32,725,414	\$40,710,870
Total expenses	\$28,833,803	\$31,967,169
Net assets	\$60,384,068	\$55,335,918

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

Combining and combined statements of financial position • March 31, 2011 (unaudited) and April 30, 2010

Assets	National Bahá'í Fund	Publishing Trust	Combined total	
			March 2011 unaudited	April 2010 actual
Current assets				
Cash and investments	\$28,091,680	\$ 35,501	\$28,127,181	\$26,925,916
Due (to)/from other Funds	7,546,458	(7,546,458)	-	-
Accounts and notes receivable	680,374	61,794	742,168	595,771
Inventories	185,511	348,980	534,491	530,523
Other current assets	393,935	18,276	412,211	411,791
Total current assets	\$36,897,958	\$ (7,081,907)	\$29,816,051	\$28,464,001
Property and equipment net of accumulated depreciation	\$47,707,137	\$ 210,486	\$47,917,623	\$44,847,000
Investments	1,540,085	-	1,540,085	85,000
Endowed investments and other assets	3,573,011	-	3,573,011	3,462,844
Total assets	\$89,718,191	\$ (6,871,421)	\$82,846,770	\$76,858,845
Liabilities and net assets				
Liabilities				
Current liabilities				
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 1,841,620	\$ 73,945	\$ 1,915,565	\$2,244,864
Demand notes and current maturities of long term debt	12,008,980	-	12,008,980	11,123,602
Deferred revenues and current portion of gift annuities	542,210	-	542,210	499,859
Total current liabilities	\$14,392,810	\$ 73,945	\$14,466,755	\$13,868,325
Long term debt	\$1,083,782	-	\$1,083,782	\$1,102,152
Gift annuities long term portion	3,623,525	-	3,623,525	3,263,810
Other long term liabilities	3,288,640	-	3,288,640	3,288,640
Total liabilities	\$7,995,947	-	\$7,995,947	\$7,654,602
Net assets				
Unrestricted	\$51,799,417	\$ (6,945,366)	\$44,854,051	\$40,962,440
Temporarily restricted	11,508,763	-	11,508,763	10,352,224
Permanently restricted	4,021,254	-	4,021,254	4,021,254
Total net assets	\$67,329,434	\$ (6,945,366)	\$60,384,068	\$55,335,918
Total liabilities and net assets	\$89,718,191	\$ (6,871,421)	\$82,846,770	\$76,858,845

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

Combining and combined statements of activities • March 31, 2011 (unaudited) and April 30, 2010

Changes in unrestricted net assets	National Bahá'í Fund	Publishing Trust	Combined total	
			March 2011 unaudited	April 2010 actual
Unrestricted net assets				
Contributions	\$24,492,810	-	\$24,492,810	\$29,465,335
Contributed property	228	-	228	3,012
Estate bequests	1,368,542	-	1,368,542	1,081,829
Bahá'í school tuition	997,097	-	997,097	937,455
Sale of books and materials	248,012	\$ 934,884	1,182,896	1,475,085
Investment gain (loss)	787,557	-	787,557	1,827,902
Assets released from restriction	3,896,284	-	3,896,284	5,920,252
Total unrestricted revenues	\$31,790,530	\$ 934,884	\$32,725,414	\$40,710,870
Expenses				
Contributions to other Funds	\$ 5,567,316	-	\$ 5,567,316	\$ 5,638,821
Education and teaching activities	7,571,050	-	7,571,050	8,012,173
Properties operations and maintenance	4,386,110	-	4,386,110	4,833,178
Cost of books and special materials	693,178	-	693,178	763,838
General administration	9,290,934	\$ 1,325,215	10,616,149	12,028,899
Change in defined benefit plan ¹	-	-	-	690,260
Total expenses	\$27,508,588	\$ 1,325,215	\$28,833,803	\$31,967,169
Increase/(decrease) in unrestricted net assets	\$4,281,942	\$ (390,331)	\$3,891,611	\$ 8,743,701
Changes in temporarily restricted net assets				
Contributions	\$ 5,615,654	-	\$ 5,615,654	\$ 6,348,984
Net assets released from restriction	(4,459,115)	-	(4,459,115)	(5,920,252)
Increase/(decrease) in temporarily restricted net assets	\$ 1,156,539	-	\$1,156,539	\$ 428,732
Increase/(decrease) in net assets	\$ 5,438,481	\$ (390,331)	\$5,048,150	\$ 9,172,433
Net assets, beginning of year	\$61,890,953	\$(6,555,035)	\$55,335,918	\$46,163,485
Net assets, end of year	\$67,329,434	\$(6,945,366)	\$60,384,068	\$55,335,918

¹ Change in defined benefit plan recorded annually based on investment values and actuarial assumptions at fiscal year end

Notes to Financial Statements • March 31, 2011, and April 30, 2010

Operations and accounting policies

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States (the Assembly) was established in 1927 as a voluntary trust and subsequently incorporated in October 1994 as an Illinois not-for-profit corporation to administer, teach, and further the Bahá'í Faith in the United States.

The accounts of the Assembly are maintained on the accrual basis. The financial statements of the Assembly include the assets, liabilities, net assets (deficits), and financial activities of the National Bahá'í Fund and the Bahá'í Publishing Trust.

The principal accounting policies used by the Assembly are as follows:

Contributions

All contributions from members of the Faith, unless specifically restricted by the donor, are considered to be available for unrestricted use and are recorded as received. Contributions in kind are recorded at an amount representing the estimated fair value of goods and services received during the year. Items received of artistic or religious significance for which no value can be readily determined and which are not anticipated to be sold are recorded at nominal value.

Contributions from nonmembers may not be used to support the Faith and, accordingly, such amounts received are distributed for other humanitarian causes. Contributions restricted by the donor for particular programs and projects, or for property and equipment acquisitions, are earned and reported as revenues when the Assembly has incurred expenses for the purpose specified by the donor. Such amounts received, but not yet earned, are reported as restricted deferred amounts. Estate bequests are recorded when the funds are received.

Tax-exempt status

The U.S. Treasury Department has held that the National Spiritual Assembly and all subordinate Local Spiritual Assemblies are exempt from Federal income tax as organizations described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (I.R.C.) of 1986. Accordingly, contributions made to the National Spiritual Assembly and all of its subordinate Local Spiritual Assemblies are deductible by the donors for Federal income tax purposes as provided by I.R.C. Section 170.

Bequests, legacies, devises, transfers, or gifts to the National Spiritual Assembly or its subordinate Local Assemblies are deductible for Federal estate and gift tax purposes as provided by I.R.C. Sections 2055, 2106, and 2522.

Inventories

Inventories of books and special materials are recorded at the lower of cost, using the average cost method, or market.

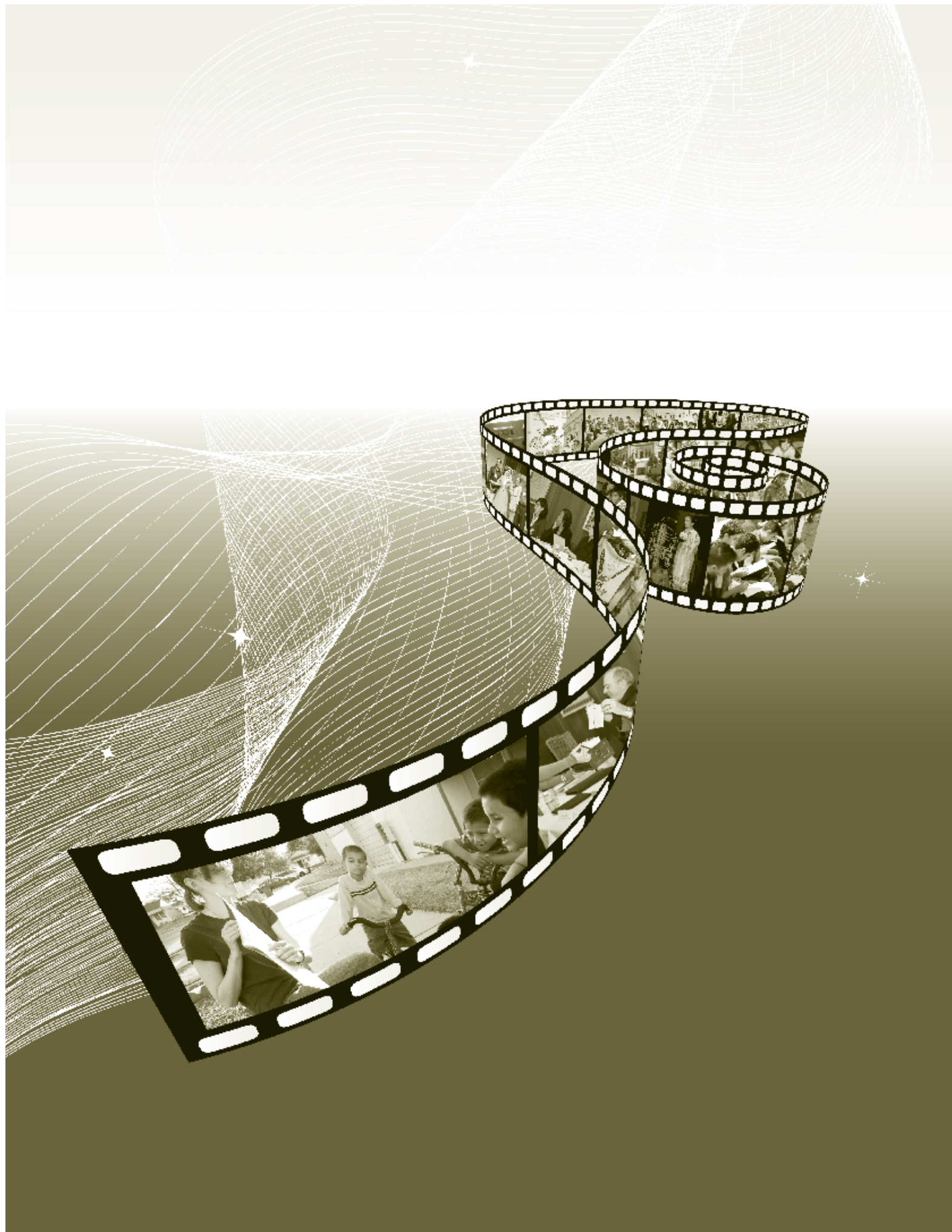
Investments

Investments are recorded at market value.

Property and equipment

Property and equipment are stated at cost. The Assembly computes depreciation of fixed assets over their estimated useful lives using the straight line method. The estimated lives used in computing depreciation are as follows:

Asset description	Asset life
Furniture/Equipment	3–10 years
Buildings/Improvements	5–40 years
Bahá'í House of Worship	75 years



National Teaching Office National Statistics Officer

The American Bahá'í community ends the year, and the Five Year Plan, having made significant progress in increasing the tempo of teaching in virtually every quarter of the country. Contingents of believers, alive with the vision of the Cause, are changing the rhythm of community life in their neighborhoods through study and service stimulated by the institute process. Evident in the emerging culture is the effect of individuals—supported by institutions and agencies—engaging in conversations with people of all backgrounds, propelling our national community toward sustainable large-scale expansion and consolidation.

The National Teaching Office collects stories (through direct interaction with regional staff, emails from clusters, and posts on teaching.bahai.us), statistics, and conversation about progress unfolding across the country; cultivates space for consultation on issues related to expansion and consolidation; studies statistics and trends in growth activities, especially from clusters with intensive programs of growth; identifies and systematizes the lessons being learned through action and reflection; and supports the Regional Bahá'í Councils in development of their seeker response networks. The resulting knowledge is offered to institutions at all levels, with particular service and assistance to the National Spiritual Assembly and the Regional Councils. Against this backdrop, the National Teaching Office humbly offers this survey of progress seen during the Five Year Plan just concluding.

New vibrant communities were created

A signal accomplishment is the doubling, since Rīḍván 2006, of the number of Ruhi Institute courses completed, to more than 114,000. (Please see the tables on page 72 for exact statistics relevant to this and the following paragraphs.) Among highlights of this strengthening of resources:

- More than 12,900 people completed Ruhi Book 1, *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit*—almost twice the number that completed the course during the previous Plan. Evidence that this increased the friends' capacity to heighten the devotional character of neighborhoods everywhere is apparent in that the Plan saw a near-doubling of the number of localities with regular devotional gatherings.
- Nearly 8,700 completers of Book 3, *Teaching Children's Classes, Grade One*, made it possible for children's classes—80 percent of them at the neighborhood level—to register a 126 percent increase in the nationwide number of participating children from other than Bahá'í families.
- Some 4,000 youths and adults developed the capacity to serve junior youth, raising significantly the country's commitment to assist these tender souls in navigating through a crucial period in their lives, and consequently widening



69 ...National Teaching Office
and National Statistics Officer

73 ...Office of International
Pioneering

A signal accomplishment is the doubling, since Rīḍván 2006, of the number of Ruhi Institute courses completed, to more than 114,000.

In five years, our national community welcomed 13,500 new believers, representing a 56 percent increase over the previous Plan. Bolstered by 7,600 more teachers who completed Book 6, Teaching the Cause, and supported by a substantial mobilization in cluster-level teaching campaigns, growth accelerated across all age groups.

dramatically the number of neighborhoods and cities served. Seventy percent of these groups' participants are not Bahá'í (for more information, see the report from the Junior Youth Desk, page 77).

- As its vision extended outward, the American Bahá'í community witnessed some 12,000 friends in the community of interest joining it shoulder-to-shoulder on the path of service and study, a 70 percent rise in five years.
- At the center of this surge in capacity are the 11,000 who have completed Book 7, *Walking Together on a Path of Service*, nearly doubling the reserve of people trained to serve as tutors at Riḍván 2006. Twenty percent of them actively served as tutors.

Marked increase in new-member growth

Expansion efforts resulted in a significant increase in the number of new believers joining the Faith (see chart, page 71). In five years, our national community welcomed 13,500 new believers, representing a 56 percent increase over the previous Plan. Bolstered by 7,600 more teachers who completed Book 6, *Teaching the Cause*, and supported by a substantial mobilization in cluster-level teaching campaigns of these teachers at a rate of 57 percent, growth accelerated across all age groups. Adult and youth enrollments increased by 65 percent, while junior youth and child registrations rose by 41 percent. More than 80 percent of these new believers live in clusters that have experience supporting intensive growth.

Momentum rises with emerging community spirit

"Propelled by mounting spiritual forces" and energized by a steady flow of believers through the sequence of institute courses, our community gained considerable momentum by Riḍván 2009. And, depending upon whether they resided in clusters engaged in embryonic or intensive programs of growth, one-third to two-thirds of the new believers participated in core activities, some quickly moving to the forefront of activity and others more tentatively. Collectively, these actions gave rise to a sixfold increase in the number of clusters operating intensive programs of growth, from 34 at the start of the Plan to 236.

Coordinated response to Internet and telephone seekers

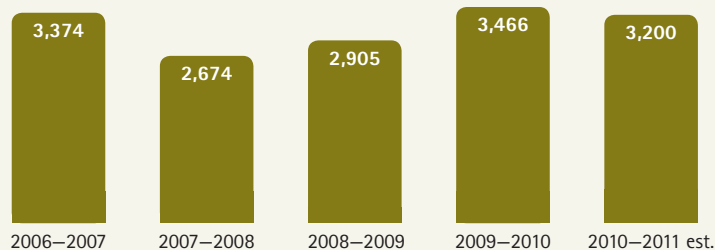
Nearly 15,700 seekers reached out to the Bahá'í community either through www.bahai.us (75 percent of that number) or through the national toll-free phone line (1-800-22UNITE). During this Plan, the program for responding to these seekers devolved from a small team of supporters at the national level to a decentral-

ized enterprise supported at the regional and cluster levels. Now coordinated at the regional level, volunteers work closely with cluster agencies and institutions. This enables capable human resources numbering in the thousands to arise—with confidence and agility gained through participation in the institute process, and with the support of the rich continuum of resources at the cluster level—to interact with these inquiring souls wherever they may reside.

In April 2009, an "online registration" portal to growth was launched to accept declarations of faith by Web visitors residing in the United States. To date, nearly 1,000 seekers have declared online, and due to loving and organized

Inquiries through Seeker Response Program, by year

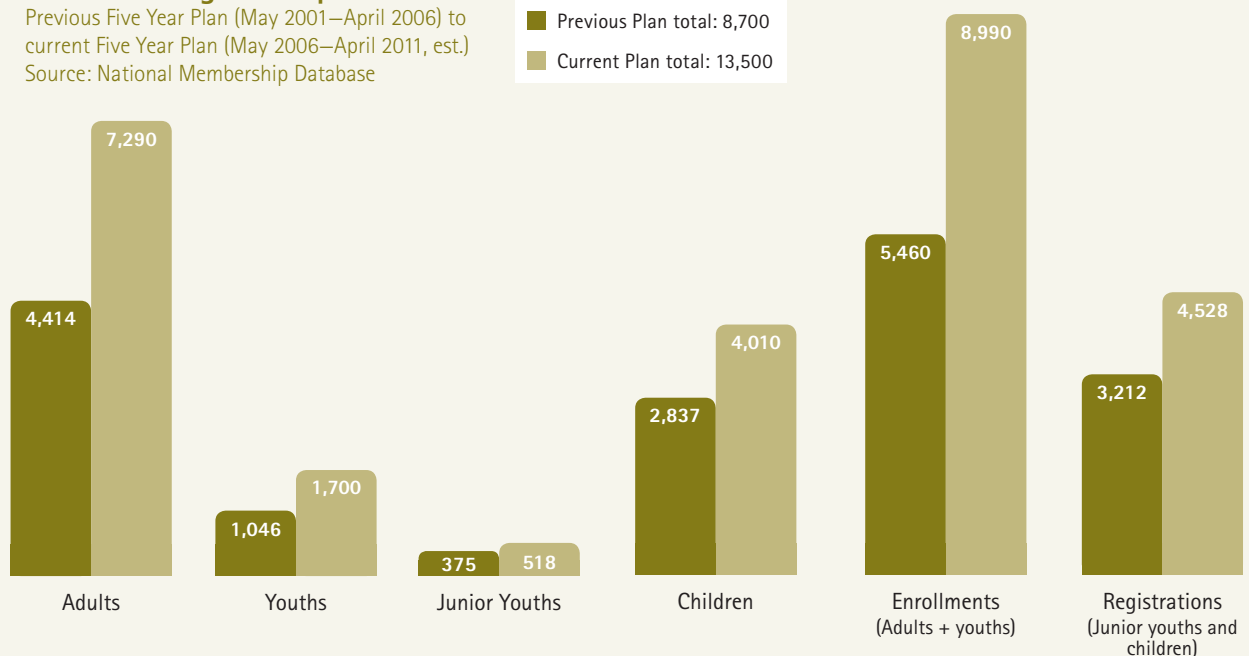
Source: Seeker Response Database, February 2011
each year: May through April



New believer growth up 56%

Previous Five Year Plan (May 2001–April 2006) to current Five Year Plan (May 2006–April 2011, est.)

Source: National Membership Database



follow-up at the regional and cluster levels and the capacity of more friends “to enter into meaningful and distinctive conversation,” 90 percent of them are now enrolled and nearly half have begun core activities. As the national public website (www.bahai.us) is continuously refined, the capacity at the level of the cluster expands to meet the needs of more and more friends of the Cause.

Rising collaboration and information sharing

Systematic gathering of information useful for planning at the cluster level continues as the friends gain awareness about the role statistical information plays in the growth process.

Since 2008, the role of the National Statistics Officer has been to stimulate the coordination of information gathering and sharing, beginning at the level of the cluster and with each other level—including local, regional, and national levels. One instrument created for this purpose by the Bahá’í World Center is the Statistical Report Program (SRP). Full implementation within every cluster in the country was achieved, thanks to collaboration and consultation at all of these levels.

To date, nearly 1,000 seekers have declared online, and due to loving and organized follow-up at the regional and cluster levels and the capacity of more friends “to enter into meaningful and distinctive conversation,” 90 percent of them are now enrolled and nearly half have begun core activities.

Five Year Plan progress update

Institute courses completed

	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Book 4	Book 5	Book 6	Book 7	Bk 8 Unit 1	All/Total
Riḍván 2011(a)	32,093	21,405	15,823	16,469	4,084	12,864	10,775	702	114,215
Riḍván 2006(b)	19,183	11,811	7,132	7,648	0	5,248	5,544	0	56,566
Change	12,910 (+67%)	9,594 (+81%)	8,691 (+122%)	8,821 (+115%)	4,084 (n/a)	7,616 (+145%)	5,231 (+94%)	702 (n/a)	57,649 (+102%)

Study circles

	Number active	Participants	Estimated number of friends of the Faith	Number active	Participants	Est. from families of friends of the Faith
Riḍván 2011 (a)	2,161	7,274	1,630	1,168	7,286	4,029
Riḍván 2007 (c)	2,078	8,179	1,361	1,046	6,662	1,783
Change	83 (+4%)	-905 (-11%)	269 (+20%)	122 (+12%)	624 (+9%)	2,246 (+126%)

Children's classes

Devotional meetings

	Number reg. held	Total localities	Total avg. participants	Estimated number of friends of the Faith
Riḍván 2011 (a)	1,934	1,576	13,011	4,252
Riḍván 2007 (c)	1,661	815	11,771	3,424
Change	273 (+16%)	761 (+93%)	1,240 (+11%)	828 (+24%)

Junior youth groups

	Number active	Participants	Est. from families of friends of the Faith
Riḍván 2011 (a)	521	3,131	2,178
Riḍván 2007 (c)	247	1,408	600
Change	274 (+111%)	1,723 (+122%)	1,578 (+263%)

Clusters at each stage

	D	C	B	IPG	Total	Enrollments (adult, youth)	Registrations (child, jr. youth)
Current Plan	40	594	16	236	886	8,990	4,528
Previous Plan	44	769	98	34	945	5,460	3,212
Change	-4 (-9%)	-175 (-23%)	-82 (-84%)	202 (+594%)	-59 (-6%)	3,530 (+65%)	1,316 (+41%)

Enrollments, registrations

Key:

(a) = Riḍván 2011 Year 5 = snapshot as of October 30, 2010 or mid-year 2010-2011

(b) = Riḍván 2006 Year 5 = snapshot as of April 30, 2006 (end of previous 5YP)

(c) = Riḍván 2007 Year 1 = snapshot as of April 30, 2007 (1st year of current 5YP)

Office of International Pioneering

As the final year of the Five Year Plan opened, the Office of International Pioneering faced a formidable task. With 446 pioneers still needed to complete the United States Bahá'í community's commitment of 1,300 for this Plan, drastic measures appeared to be required—particularly as, during the first four years of the Plan, an average of about 190 had responded to the call each year. Further, the minimum length of qualifying service had been expanded from three to six months, thus eliminating summer service in the recorded count. National Spiritual Assemblies in goal countries around the world continued to call for pioneers with experience as Ruhi Institute tutors to help them strengthen and expand the four core activities in targeted communities. Fluency in the language of the country in which she or he sought to serve was a critical factor in a prospective pioneer's receiving from its National Spiritual Assembly an invitation to come.

The office sent pioneers to 130 of the more than 150 pioneering goal countries during the Five Year Plan. Since April 2010, pioneers were sent for the first time to the following 10 countries: Category 1: Africa (*Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone*); Asia (*Sri Lanka*); Category 2: Africa (*Guinea, Equatorial Guinea*); Americas (*Uruguay, St. Vincent and the Grenadines*); Europe (*Belarus, Greece*); Australasia (*Caroline Islands*).

Members of the National Spiritual Assembly and special guests spoke at 12 well-attended pioneering recruitment meetings held around the country from June 2010 to March 2011, each time calling on the believers to arise and help to meet the goal. Each meeting generated excitement and numerous responses. The meetings were held in Austin, Texas; Sterling, Virginia; Nashville, Tennessee; Los Angeles, California; Bellevue, Washington; Boston, Massachusetts; Phoenix, Arizona; Tampa Bay, Florida; Chicago, Illinois; San Clemente, California; Portland, Oregon; and Plantation, Florida.

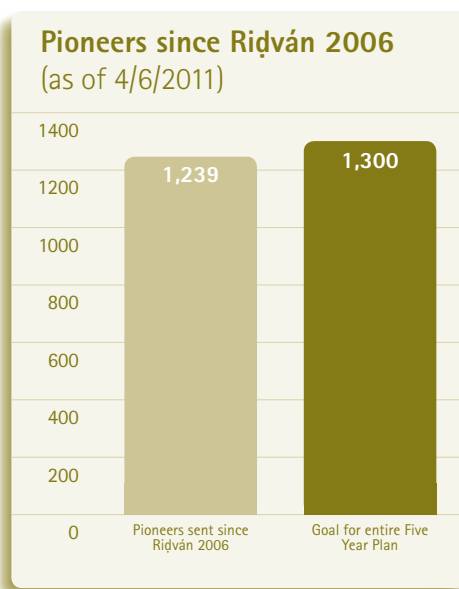
The national Bahá'í schools, the office's network of pioneer resource persons (PRPs), and the Local Spiritual Assemblies of communities across the country assisted in directing people to the office. *The American Bahá'í* gave expanded coverage to the goal and the need for pioneers. As a result of this combined effort, more people responded to the call, and a need for additional weekend orientation workshops to prepare pioneers was generated. Beyond the four regularly scheduled workshops held at the three schools and one held each May in Evanston, six additional orientation sessions were held across the country during the year. These were sponsored by the Spiritual Assemblies of Marietta, Georgia; Nashville, Tennessee; Los Angeles, California; Bellevue, Washington; Clearwater/Pinellas County, Florida; and Raleigh/Durham, North Carolina.

Of the more than 150 goal countries given to the U.S. Bahá'í community, 30 countries remain to which we have yet to send any pioneers. Barriers emerge for many reasons: a higher cost of living; visa limitations; State Department travel

The office sent pioneers to 130 of the more than 150 pioneering goal countries during the Five Year Plan.

The work of the Pioneer Resource Persons Network overcame challenges created by the office's diminished staffing, and this community of devoted volunteers provided increasing assistance and support.

restrictions, etc. These and a scarcity of French-speakers were among challenges the office faced in placing pioneers.



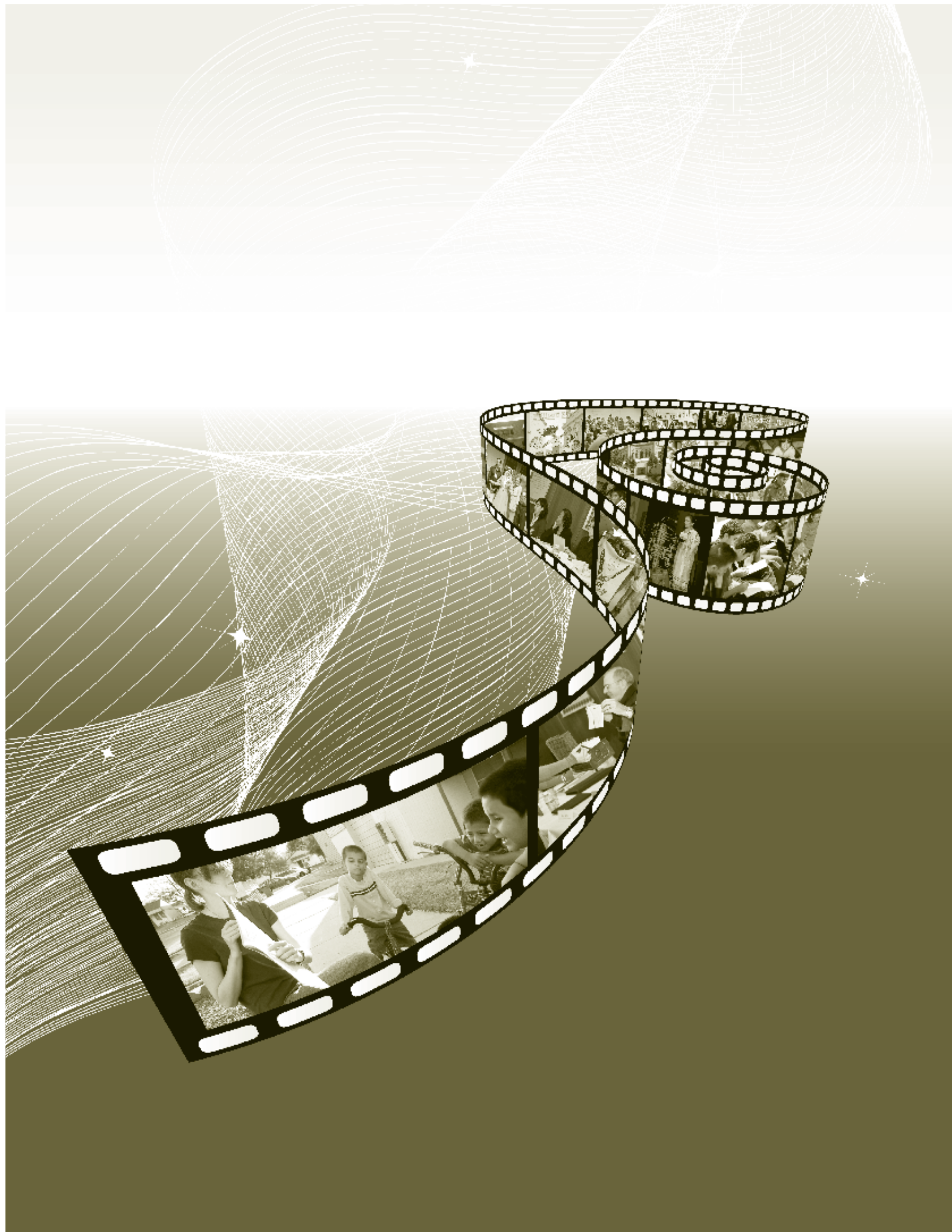
Actions to reduce the office's operating costs continued during 2010–11. Notably, only one of the three salaried positions which had, in recent years, been eliminated was replaced. As in previous years, wonderful volunteers served in place of staff in handling office tasks and whenever possible at off-site events. Most printing was either donated or eliminated. The work of the Pioneer Resource Persons Network overcame challenges created by the office's diminished staffing, and this community of devoted volunteers provided increasing assistance and support.

Representation by staff and PRP volunteers at numerous conferences throughout the year assisted with community education and pioneer

recruitment. Staff members offered workshops at the Green Lake Bahá'í Conference in Green Lake, Wisconsin, and the Bahá'í Conference on Social and Economic Development in Orlando, Florida. Volunteer PRPs presented at the Grand Canyon Bahá'í Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, and at many regional summer and winter Bahá'í schools.

The Bahá'í community responded with financial support to assist those who arose. Continued appeals to contribute to the pioneer deputization fund have been made in the pages of *The American Bahá'í*, in occasional Feast letters, and through Pioneering Resource Person channels, resulting in a moderate response.

At this writing, just 61 more pioneers are needed to fulfill our commitment to the Universal House of Justice to dispatch 1,300 international pioneers during this Five Year Plan (see chart above). During the past year, 385 pioneers left the U.S. to serve at international posts. In addition, 206 traveling teachers made trips of various durations, making the total for this Plan about 1,723.



Junior Youth Desk

In its Riḍván 2010 message, the Universal House of Justice described the “rapid spread of the program for the spiritual empowerment of junior youth” as “yet another expression of cultural advance in the Bahá’í community.” The development of the junior youth program in the United States since last Riḍván is an excellent example of this reality.

At every level, there has been remarkable progress in the expansion of the junior youth program during the year 2010–11. Every region and nearly every cluster with an intensive program of growth has experienced the multiplication of groups at an accelerated pace. No doubt this was a direct response to the call of the National Spiritual Assembly, issued in a letter to all Regional Bahá’í Councils on May 13, 2010, drawing the attention of the regional institutions to the need to strengthen this fourth core activity. As a result, close to 5,000 junior youths are now “exploring themes from a Bahá’í perspective” and becoming exposed to the transforming power of the Word of God for this Day. They are analyzing “the constructive and destructive forces operating in society,” recognizing “the influences these forces exert on their thoughts and actions,” “sharpening their spiritual perception, enhancing their powers of expression and reinforcing moral structures that will serve them throughout their lives.” These young people are now “being given the tools needed to combat the forces that would rob them of their true identity as noble beings and to work for the common good.”

This increase in the number of junior youths being served by the spiritual empowerment program is noteworthy, indeed. More notable, however, has been the pronounced strengthening of the quality of the groups across the country. Chief among the many improvements has been the emphasis on the effective use of the materials—namely, the nine books currently available in the curriculum of the program: *Breezes of Confirmation*, *Glimmerings of Hope*, *Thinking about Numbers*, *Spirit of Faith*, *Walking the Straight Path*, *Learning about Excellence*, *The Power of the Holy Spirit*, *The Human Temple*, and *Drawing on the Power of the Word*. In addition to better and more widespread use of the books, there have been other important qualitative improvements in the program. For example, the nature of the service activities initiated and carried out by groups is increasingly being tied to the needs of the youths’ own communities. Gatherings for several junior youth groups, whether from across a cluster or from within a neighborhood, are being held with greater regularity. Animators are beginning to organize their lives around service to this “special population with special needs” and share with each other what they are learning in regular gatherings of reflection and consultation.

Such significant progress would not have been possible without the concerted attention given to the work by the Regional Bahá’í Councils, Regional Training Institutes, Auxiliary Board members, and cluster agencies. Indeed, over 300 members



77 ... Junior Youth Desk

79 ... Social Action Desk

Notable has been the pronounced strengthening of the quality of junior youth groups across the country. Chief among the many improvements has been the emphasis on the effective use of the materials—namely, the nine books currently available in the curriculum of the program.

Together, the learning sites at the Triangle, North Carolina cluster and the East Valley, Arizona cluster served approximately 65 clusters and trained over 120 coordinators.

of these institutions participated in a series of six seminars, one in each region, to discuss the junior youth spiritual empowerment program. At each weekend seminar, the friends who gathered reviewed relevant guidance from the Bahá'í World Center, read testimonials from junior youths about the efficacy of the program, explored the role of the fourth core activity in an intensive program of growth, discussed the functions of a cluster-level coordinator for junior youth groups, analyzed the various elements of the spiritual empowerment program, and became familiar with the operation of a learning site.

During the second year of its functioning, the desk identified a second cluster to serve as a learning site for the junior youth program. Together, the Triangle, North Carolina cluster and the East Valley, Arizona cluster served approximately 65 clusters and trained over 120 coordinators. The adequate accompaniment of these clusters would not have been possible without the addition of two full-time resource persons who helped facilitate training seminars and carry out field visits to the clusters served by the sites.

While the advances of the past year have been primarily due to the work of the friends at the grass roots—especially the animators and the junior youth group coordinators—the work of the desk received considerable assistance from the resident Continental Counselors, who provided unflagging support and all of whom participated in at least one, if not two, of the regional seminars. Furthermore, the participation in a meeting in early May 2010 of Mrs. Sona Arbab of the Bahá'í World Center's Office of Social and Economic Development was instrumental in defining the priorities of the work of the desk over the course of the year.

The development of the junior youth program in the United States during the year 2010–11 should offer yet more sterling evidence of the capacity of the American Bahá'í community to achieve outstanding feats in service to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. There is little doubt that in the coming year the friends will build on their gains, reach out to thousands more junior youths, and surpass all expectations again.

Social Action Desk

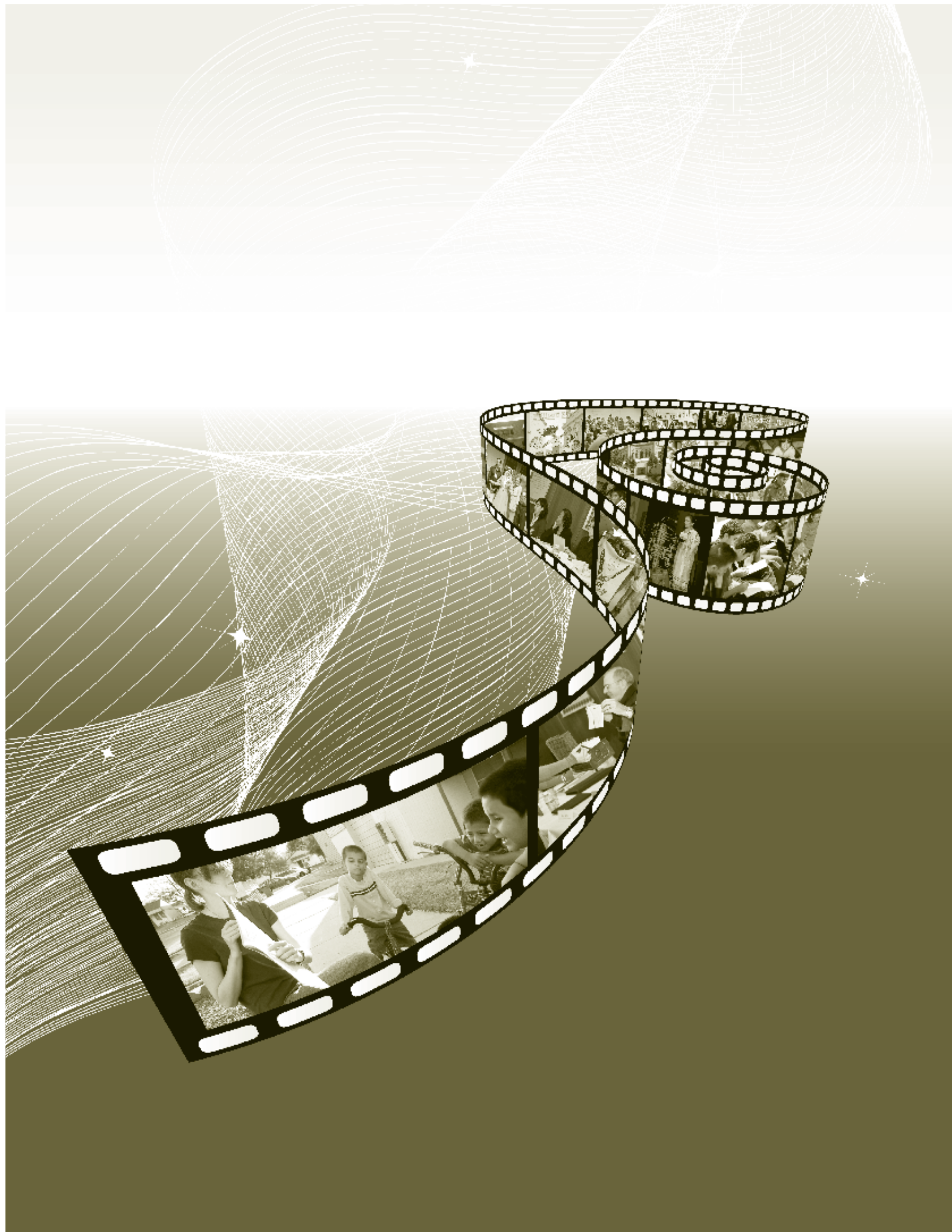
The Social Action Desk was formed in May 2010 by the National Spiritual Assembly, in consultation with the Bahá'í World Center. An agency of the National Assembly, it also has a direct link with the Office of Social and Economic Development (OSED) at the World Center and consults with and receives training and advice from that office. Among the aims of the desk are to:

- Learn what is happening in terms of social action in clusters across the country.
- Explore with the friends in these clusters how the processes they are engaged in can be strengthened.
- Systematize learning and gradually raise up human resources for this field of endeavor.

Taking the 236 clusters with intensive programs of growth in place as its initial field of study, the desk narrowed its focus on visiting selected clusters in the six regions of the country. During 2010–11, over 30 clusters were visited, some of them more than once. In the course of these visits, the desk was able to participate in a variety of cluster activities—particularly home visits and neighborhood gatherings. Meetings were held with a cross section of institutions, agencies, and individuals at the cluster and, sometimes, regional levels, in an effort to extend “to other spheres of operation the mode of learning which has so undeniably come to characterize [the communities’] teaching endeavours” and gain “the capacity needed to employ with a high degree of coherence the instruments and methods which [the community] has so painstakingly developed.”

In addition to these activities, the desk has, during this first year of its work, both traveled to Haifa for training and consultation at OSED and participated in consultative meetings with other offices and agencies of the National Spiritual Assembly and with various Bahá'í institutions throughout the United States.

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Office of Assembly Development

During 2010–11, the Office of Assembly Development continued its efforts to assist Local Spiritual Assemblies to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of their administrative functioning, thus enabling them to focus more of their energies on the work of teaching the Faith, where their participation is vital to the growth of the Bahá'í community.

Currently, the office provides support to Local Assemblies via two means:

- Developing print and electronic materials providing the most recent guidance from the senior institutions of the Faith on matters affecting Assembly operations and procedures and on issues likely to come before Assemblies for consideration.
- Offering periodic training seminars, workshops, and other events and materials designed to develop fundamental skills needed by Assembly members to complete the work of the Assembly.

Some of the office's continuing projects include:

- Maintaining the manual *Guidelines for Local Spiritual Assemblies: Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*, its supplement on domestic violence, and information especially for Bahá'í groups, and keeping them all up to date with the latest guidance from the Faith's senior institutions.
- Organizing Local Spiritual Assembly Special Visits to the Bahá'í National Center.
- Organizing Assembly skill-building conferences nationwide.
- Moderating the "Reflecting Pool," an online forum on Assemblies and the work of the Five Year Plan (www.assemblyforum.usbnc.org).
- Developing workshops and materials relevant to the needs of Assemblies.

Materials

This year, updates were made to both *Guidelines for Local Spiritual Assemblies* and its supplement on domestic violence. Both documents and lists of the changes made are available in electronic form on the national Bahá'í Administrative Website (in .pdf format only).

In the past, the booklet *Guidance for Bahá'í Groups* was available to the community through the Office of Assembly Development. The booklet provided guidance relevant to the functioning of registered Bahá'í groups. Since most of the most recent guidance could be obtained from other sources, such as *Guidelines for Local Spiritual Assemblies* and the Regional Bahá'í Councils, it was decided to create a webpage for the remaining guidance; this can also be found on the Administrative Website in the pages provided under the heading "Assembly Development."

81 ...Office of Assembly Development

83 ...Office of Community Administration

85 ...Persian-American Affairs Office

Updates were made to both Guidelines for Local Spiritual Assemblies and its supplement on domestic violence. A webpage was created for guidance especially applicable to registered Bahá'í groups.

A total of 94 Assembly members gathered at Bosch Bahá'í School in Santa Cruz, California, for a three-day conference that focused on building Assemblies' administrative capacity.

Events

The office continued its Local Spiritual Assembly Special Visit program, which invites Assemblies from around the country to visit the Bahá'í National Center in Evanston, enabling members to familiarize themselves with the resources available at the Center and affording them an opportunity to share questions, comments, or suggestions directly with the National Spiritual Assembly and its offices. Another aspect of the Special Visit program is an opportunity for the participating Assemblies to consult with one another on the Five Year Plan guidance and the activities of their communities. During 2010–11, this consultation focused on the Ridván 2010 letter of the Universal House of Justice and the role of Assemblies in helping the community and cluster to achieve the remaining goals of the Plan now concluding.

A total of 120 members from 18 Local Assemblies participated in the Special Visits this year. Those who participated rated the visit highly (an average of 4.9 on a 5-point usefulness scale) and reported a greater understanding of their role in the Plan.

The Office of Assembly Development also held an Assembly skill-building conference in January 2011 entitled “Translating Vision into Practice: Fostering the Organic Development of the Bahá'í Community,” to which Local Spiritual Assembly members throughout the country were invited. A total of 94 Assembly members, representing 37 Local Assemblies from eight states, gathered at Bosch Bahá'í School in Santa Cruz, California, for a three-day conference that focused on building Assemblies' administrative capacity.

As in previous such conferences, the focus was on imparting practical information and skills on a variety of topics useful in the day-to-day functioning of a Local Spiritual Assembly. All workshops were presented by staff of the Bahá'í National Center. Plenary talks entitled “The Local Spiritual Assembly's Role in the Current Plan” and “‘An Ethos of Loving Service’: The Bahá'í Administrative System, a System unlike Anything in the World Today,” were given by Ms. S. Valerie Dana and Ms. Erica Toussaint-Brock, respectively. Both were well-attended by conference participants as well as by a few local Bahá'ís.

In the final presentation of the conference, both National Spiritual Assembly members shared the stage in an intimate discussion with conference participants about their experiences as National Assembly members—with both providing insights into the Assembly's functioning that emphasized unity and loving consultation. As was later reflected in the conference evaluations, conference participants were both moved and motivated by this presentation.

Over the past few years, the Office of Assembly Development has found the one-day conferences held at venues close to the home communities of participating Assemblies to be far more popular than those requiring more time and travel. This can be seen as a testimony to the truth that time is a precious commodity, best employed at this moment in efforts to advance the work of the new Five Year Plan. Consequently, the office will strive to hold more local one-day events, hoping by this to extend its services to a greater number of Local Assembly members.

Office of Community Administration

The Office of Community Administration provides administrative support to the National Spiritual Assembly by offering guidance to Local Spiritual Assemblies, registered groups, and individual believers concerning issues of community functioning and the application of Bahá'í laws and principles. It responds on behalf of the National Assembly to inquiries, for example, about Bahá'í status, burial, business or financial disputes, citizenship applications, community boundaries, Covenant-breaking, disunity, divorce, domestic violence, Local Spiritual Assembly formation and functioning, marriage, mental illness, mishandling of Bahá'í funds, and questionable enrollments. When needed, the office also prepares information to be shared with Bahá'í institutions internationally.

Another function of the office is to assemble and present personal status cases for the National Assembly's consideration, which typically involves gathering and summarizing background information and incorporating recommendations from the relevant Local Spiritual Assembly. During the past year (March 1, 2010–11), the National Assembly removed the membership privileges of 40 believers and restored those of 14 others. While over half of the deprivation cases involved either knowing violations of Bahá'í marriage law or immorality (primarily, couples choosing to live together without the benefit of marriage), others involved issues such as abuse, alcohol, finances, and violations of criminal law. Because of their complexity, many of the cases required extensive documentation. Thirteen cases involved imposing or removing restrictions (for example, from serving on an Assembly, attending Bahá'í events, or having unsupervised contact with children or youth), and 13 cases concerned whether individuals should be exempted from the requirement of obtaining parental consent for marriage.

The Community Administration office also handles requests from individuals to have their Bahá'í membership withdrawn or reinstated. In the past year, there were 411 withdrawals and 38 reinstatements (increases of 87 and 5, respectively, from the previous year). Reports of Bahá'í divorce are received by the office as well. In 2010, 82 divorces were reported (36 fewer than the previous year), involving 128 Bahá'ís. The office also fulfills requests from prisoners for information about the Faith. In the past year, 109 such responses were sent to 83 prisoners.

It is a continuing challenge for Community Administration to provide timely responses to the many telephone calls, letters, and email messages it receives each year. Over the past year, the office received approximately 684 letters (120 fewer than the previous year) and 7,146 emails (1,217 more than the previous year). These figures do not include the many additional emails that go directly to the office manager and regional consultants.

Besides providing guidance in writing and by telephone, Community Administration assists Assemblies to better understand and address issues pertaining to Bahá'í law and administration through the skills-building conferences and the Spiritual

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Representatives of the Office of Community Administration began working with Local Spiritual Assemblies for the 50 largest Bahá'í communities in the United States, providing them with specialized training and assistance in the handling of personal status issues and in educating their respective communities about various Bahá'í laws.

Assembly Special Visits program, both of which are managed by the Office of Assembly Development. The offices also work together closely to improve and integrate new guidance into *Guidelines for Local Spiritual Assemblies: Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities*.

In May 2010, representatives of the Office of Community Administration began working with Local Spiritual Assemblies for the 50 largest Bahá'í communities in the United States, providing them with specialized training and assistance in the handling of personal status issues and in educating their respective communities about various Bahá'í laws. As a first step in this effort, the office conducted a telephone survey of each of the Assemblies to understand what their current approaches were to such matters. Most of the Assemblies reported that the gathering of background information on personal status cases was still being done by Assembly members themselves and that few or no efforts were being made to educate the friends in their communities about the laws of the Faith. Based on the survey's results, individual Assemblies are now being approached with offers of training and support in these areas. In addition, the office has begun writing a regular section of the new "Fundamentals for believers" feature in *The American Bahá'í*, entitled "Abiding in God's Law." Each issue addresses a different Bahá'í law in a question-and-answer format.

With this shift in focus toward more training—which has involved its manager of 16 years and another of its most experienced staff members—the year 2010–11 has been a year of transition for the Office of Community Administration. The hiring of a fifth regional consultant in March 2011, however, which restored the office's previous level of staffing, should help in its efforts to provide more timely responses to the many emails, phone calls, and letters it regularly receives.

Persian-American Affairs Office

During 2010–11, the Persian-American Affairs Office (PAAO) continued to be active in assisting the sponsors of Iranian Bahá'í refugees being transferred to the Bahá'í community of the United States.

With their numbers amounting to approximately 25,000, some 13 percent of the American Bahá'í community are Persian-American. Of these, nearly 43 percent are refugees who have come to this country in the decades following the 1979 Iranian revolution, most of them since 2000. Their rate of influx has required local Bahá'í institutions to handle many of the issues pertinent to their settlement and integration. The Persian-American Affairs Office regularly receives calls for assistance from Local Spiritual Assemblies in this regard and responds by sending the diverse helpful materials the office has developed over the course of many years dealing with this important—and, not infrequently, complex and delicate—matter.

The task of integrating the Persian-American members of this community into full participation in its life remains one of the most significant activities engaging the time and energy of this office. It is vitally important that the services of these generally knowledgeable, deeply devoted, richly talented sisters and brothers in Faith be enlisted in pursuing the goals set before our community. Through such integration, local Bahá'í communities across the nation have been greatly and permanently enriched.

The PAAO has often worked with other offices and agencies of the National Spiritual Assembly to facilitate the integration of newly-arrived Bahá'ís from Iran. During 2010–11, close collaboration continued with the Office of the Secretary, the Office of Assembly Development, the Office of Community Administration, and Information Technology's Membership Office in ensuring that arrangements for the successful transfer, settlement, and integration of Iranian Bahá'ís kept pace with continual changes in the dynamics of their immigration.

Throughout the year, the PAAO continued to assist individuals and refugee organizations and to cooperate with the National Spiritual Assemblies of various transit countries by providing documents verifying facets of immigrating believers' personal status—such as marriage and membership confirmations. Individuals who have travelled to Iran for visits or to get married have been introduced to the friends in Iran through the Office of Persian and Arab Affairs in London.

The office continued to supervise the Persian translation of the National Spiritual Assembly's Feast messages. It also translated various documents and pieces of correspondence either from or into Persian for other National Assembly offices and agencies, including the text of the monthly Treasurers Notes and instructions for casting ballots in the election of the Regional Bahá'í Councils and delegates to Bahá'í National Convention.

The PAAO has also continued to certify the transcripts of graduates of the Bahá'í

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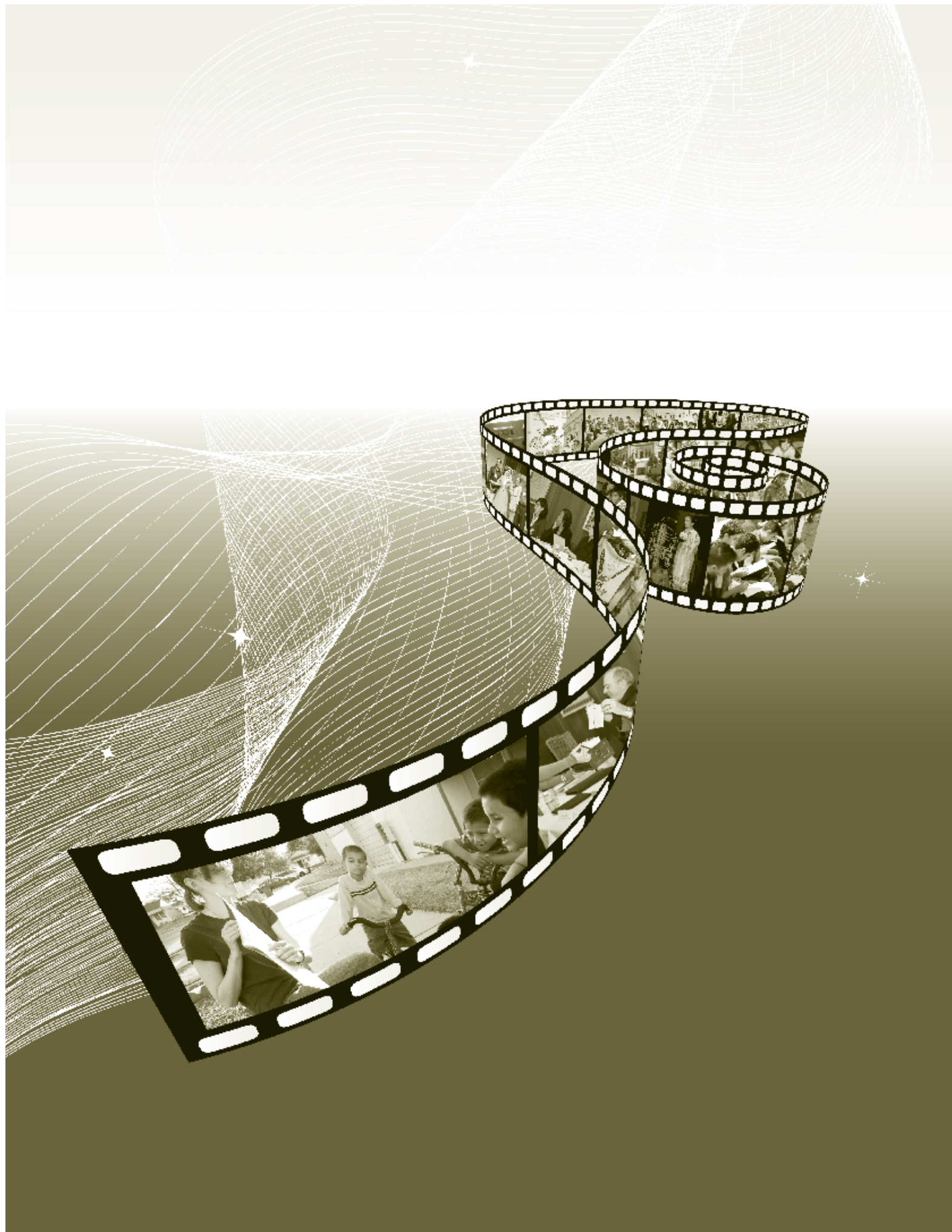
The office reviews articles for *The American Bahá'í* and prepares an average of six Persian pages for each issue of the magazine, as well as for its online counterpart. This year, the PAAO discontinued assistance it had been giving to the activities of the 'Irfán Colloquium and the Association of Friends of Persian Culture, owing to reductions in the office's staff and the necessity of its maintaining a sharp focus on issues concerning newly-arrived Iranian refugees.

The PAAO continued to assist subscribers to and inquirers about *Payám-i-Bahá'í*—a Bahá'í magazine in Persian, published in France and distributed worldwide—as well as the agencies responsible for collecting the subscriptions and for distributing this much-appreciated Persian publication in the United States. The office also continued collaborations with the National Spiritual Assembly's Office of External Affairs and with its Persian Public Information Desk.

The office also continued to assist the secretariat of the Persian Reviewing Panel, appointed by the Universal House of Justice to review manuscripts in Persian before their publication.

In the spring of 2010, the office coordinated and hosted the visit to Chicago of a former member of the Continental Board of Counselors for Asia and arranged for the talk he delivered at the Bahá'í House of Worship to Persian friends drawn from the Chicago metropolitan area and its environs. The office also provided services to a relatively newly-arrived Iranian Bahá'í doctoral candidate, who spent the summer conducting research at the Bahá'í National Center and in the National Bahá'í Archives.

Other activities during 2010–11 include a cataloguing of the office's library and housing of its contents in new shelves installed by the Properties Office, and the review and transmittal to the National Bahá'í Archives of the office's inactive but historically valuable files.





Office of Education and Schools

The Office of Education and Schools (OES) oversees the work of the three permanent Bahá'í schools—Bosch, Green Acre, and Louhelen Bahá'í Schools—29 seasonal Bahá'í school committees, the Wilmette Institute, and the Native American Bahá'í Institute (NABI). The office also coordinates the recruitment and placement of volunteers for the Bahá'í Youth Service Corps.

During 2010–11, the OES continued to support the Five Year Plan, directing its efforts primarily toward the:

- Offering of skill-building programs designed to assist both individuals engaged in core activities and others seeking to find their service niche.
- Enrichment of staff and volunteers through group study.
- Enhancement of school environments through capital improvement projects.

In addition, the office began to investigate themes of public discourse for a variety of age groups.

Taken together, activity and participation at Bahá'í schools over the course of 2010–11 was impressive. At the three permanent Bahá'í schools, a total of:

- 122 sessions were held.
- 6,178 individuals participated.

At seasonal Bahá'í schools around the country, a total of:

- 33 sessions were held.
- 5,447 individuals participated.

Skill development and collaboration

Significant at the year's outset was a collaborative effort—including an online study of guidance from the Faith's senior institutions—to develop themes taken from Universal House of Justice member Paul Lamplé's book *Revelation & Social Reality* with staff and presenters. A series of inspiring sessions subsequently held across the country proved the usefulness of this exercise. Participants in national school and institute sessions reported gaining an enhanced awareness of precisely how the institute process, intensive programs of growth, study, action, reflection, and consultation do their work in transforming communities. Many felt inspired to put these processes into action in their home communities.

- 89 ...Office of Education and Schools
- 92 ...Bosch Bahá'í School
- 94 ...Green Acre Bahá'í School
- 96 ...Louhelen Bahá'í School
- 98 ...Native American Bahá'í Institute
- 100 ...Wilmette Institute

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Seasonal school participants said their experience “Feels like the new Bahá’í culture described in this year’s Rīdván message” and “The School is an irreplaceable component in the process of helping my children understand what it means to be a Bahá’í.”

Creative approaches to increasing participation by young people in school and institute activities were sought throughout 2010–11. Collaborating with the National Spiritual Assembly’s Office of External Affairs and its Public Discourse Desk, programs such as “Studies in Global Prosperity” were designed especially to appeal to college-age youth, while “Environmental Stewards: Champions of Justice” was offered to junior youth. The initiation of junior youth camps and a collaboration with local Boys and Girls Clubs at the Native American Bahá’í Institute further strengthened efforts to provide sustainable junior youth groups and children’s classes on the Navajo reservation.

Teacher’s Toolbox lessons designed for children addressed both the fundamentals of the Bahá’í Faith and the schools’ annual themes. Increased emphasis was placed on action. Children at all levels devised and carried out service plans in the midst of school sessions and were encouraged to follow personal action plans on their return home.

Community building and personal transformation

Across the country, 30 seasonal school sessions experimented with community-building activities, such as intergenerational classes, arts workshops, and the forming of recreation and service teams. Participants responded with such appreciative comments as:

- “Feels like the new Bahá’í culture described in this year’s Rīdván message.”
- “The School is an irreplaceable component in the process of helping my children understand what it means to be a Bahá’í.”

Seasonal school sessions included number of friends of the Faith from all age groups, comprising close to 4.6 percent of all attendees. As one guest explained, “I’m a seeker. I saw people, adults and children, contribute creative solutions to problems, or offer and hear experiences for all to decide from. The school greatly deepened my knowledge of the Bahá’í Faith. I needed to experience the inclusiveness of group discussion as well as [to experience] just how the understanding and translation to action of the Rīdván message are intensely tussled with.”

Yearly statistics for the Bahá’í Youth Service Corps suggest little change. As in previous years, over 100 youths, including international youths from 16 countries, participated in terms of service. Volunteers served as tutors, children’s class teachers,

and junior youth program animators; assisted with home visits; and offered devotionals. They were integral in establishing relationships with agencies outside the Bahá’í community. For example, youths at Louhelen Bahá’í School participated in a local university group entitled “The Art of Unity,” lending support to community events celebrating International Peace Day, Human Rights Day, and Annual Diversity Day. Volunteers at the Native American Bahá’í Institute assisted with a door-to-door teaching campaign that ultimately led to an alliance with local Boys and Girls Clubs.





Despite these successes, school administrators continue to express concern for the difficulties these young people face as they struggle to maintain a Bahá'í identity and orientation to life within a deteriorating society. Throughout the year, administrators and youths consulted on various means of strengthening the youth service program. In consequence, the National Assembly approved designating one "youth mentor" volunteer each for the Bosch, Green Acre, and Louhelen Bahá'í Schools and for the Native American Bahá'í Institute. Mentors will accompany, encourage, and inspire other youth volunteers and ensure their time spent in service at the schools will be a spiritual learning experience. They will act as liaisons to school administrators, identify and resolve problems as they arise, accompany volunteers in their participation in core activities and local teaching efforts, seek connections with the greater community, link individuals to the training institute and teaching committee in their cluster, and generally encourage a continued life of service. The OES is recruiting mentors in hopes they can begin offering their services in early summer 2011.

Gratified and inspired by all these successful efforts, the Office of Education and Schools is working to set its course for the coming year. Group study of the most recent guidance from the Universal House of Justice has already begun as the Bahá'í community prepares to launch a new Five Year Plan.

The National Assembly approved designating one "youth mentor" volunteer each for the Bosch, Green Acre, and Louhelen Bahá'í Schools and for the Native American Bahá'í Institute. Mentors will accompany, encourage, and inspire other youth volunteers and ensure their time spent in service at the schools will be a spiritual learning experience.

Inspired by the perspectives offered in Universal House of Justice member Paul Lample's Revelation & Social Reality, the school made attempts to "refine collective understanding and behavior" to move closer to "effective action."

Bosch Bahá'í School, Santa Cruz, California

During 2010–11, Bosch Bahá'í School began to investigate, concurrently and in coherence with the core activities, the fields of public discourse and social action that are to provide exciting new opportunities for service in the new Five Year Plan. Further, and in support of the final year of the concluding Plan, the school presented courses aimed both at developing the skills of those already involved in the core activities and at assisting those who had not yet found one to discover a niche of service that would engage and inspire them to arise to action with joy.

In May, families came together to study the Ridván 2010 message with National Spiritual Assembly member Erica Toussaint-Brock. Her goal was to help participants build capacity to effectively participate in "creating a better world." A strong turnout that included over 50 children made for an active, fun, and inspiring Memorial Day weekend; response to the program was positive. Later in the summer, Persian-speaking believers were invited to join Dr. Fridoon Rahimi to study the Supreme Body's message. Participants reflected on the challenges facing the Persian-speaking community, both within and outside the Faith, and considered how that same community is uniquely equipped to find and carry out the necessary solutions.

Inspired by the perspectives offered in Universal House of Justice member Paul Lample's *Revelation & Social Reality*, the school also made attempts to "refine collective understanding and behavior" to move closer to "effective action." Facilitators were challenged to integrate into their curricula, in a preliminary and consultative way, the new public discourse and social action arenas of service. What resulted was heartening. For example, the Bosch annual workshop for musicians conducted discussions on how artists can contribute to the discourses on morality and integrity in art, while participants in the Bahá'í Network on AIDS, Sexuality, Addictions, and Abuse (BNASAA) held consultations on how they could personally add to the discourses relevant to their organization.

Yearly Youth Institutes—which are increasingly aimed at attracting youth from the wider community—also focused on the concepts of public discourse and social action in hopes of aiding participants to better understand what the terms mean and to awaken them to the profound ways Bahá'u'lláh's teachings can positively change the world. As a result, in the words of one of the teachers, "students were connecting the Faith with solving the world's problems" and demonstrating "a marked increased excitement for the core activities and the activities of the Faith in general."

Two committed environmentalists developed weekend workshops for junior youth and adults. "Climate Change: Science, Ethics, and the Bahá'í Teachings" included scientific and sociological studies to assist adults in becoming versed in the contemporary discourse on climate change and to develop their capacity as agents of change. Junior youth were offered the opportunity to become "stewards" of the



environment and were invited to develop a strong and inherent “desire to contribute to the construction of a better world.” Facilitator Peter Adriance sought to encourage the junior youth to increase their capacity and sense of commitment to the wellness of humanity and the planet. By the session’s end, 31 junior youths were ready to translate this learning into acts of service to their families, friends, and communities.

Friends of various ages and backgrounds attended a skill-building workshop designed for community children’s class teachers. By workshop’s end, individualized action plans for continued service in this endeavor were created. Some who had previously sat on the sidelines in their clusters, but who were moved by this course to overcome their fears, were inspired to act.

Other program highlights were former Universal House of Justice member Hartmut Grossmann’s class on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s seminal treatise *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, along with his wife, Ursula’s, own inspiring presentations on the Holy Land—the fruit of 15 years of service as a pilgrim guide. The couple’s humility and loving interactions with all provided a wonderful example for guests and staff alike. Hosting an undergraduate college seminar for the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity, Bosch witnessed a maturity and singularity of focus among the 50 participants over an intensive 10-day period that was awe-inspiring, as was the collective vision and execution of this program. The school’s staff looks forward to welcoming them again in December 2011 and is equally pleased to have been asked to host the graduate seminar during the upcoming summer.

The Bahá’í Youth Service Corps volunteers continue to impress with their energy and dedication. Through their efforts to complete the Ruhi Institute sequence of courses, teach children’s classes, conduct home visits, host devotional gatherings, share their artistic talents, and work diligently to make Bosch a welcoming and clean environment, they meaningfully engaged in service to the school and its cluster and enriched themselves spiritually.

In the coming year, Bosch Bahá’í School hopes that the quality of its programs, enhanced by the beauty of the campus and the selfless dedication of its staff, will increasingly provide opportunities for the friends to cultivate their capacities to engage fully with the goals and objectives of the new Five Year Plan.

Hosting an undergraduate college seminar for the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity, Bosch witnessed a maturity and singularity of focus among the 50 participants over an intensive 10-day period that was awe-inspiring, as was the collective vision and execution of this program.

For youth, the school continues to offer the Badasht Youth Academy and a special “Service and Leadership” weekend. Last summer, 15 youths and their core teams were inspired by their study of The Dawn-Breakers during Badasht to launch a three-week campaign of teaching and service in three clusters in the Northeast.

Green Acre Bahá’í School, Eliot, Maine

Among the significant goals Green Acre Bahá’í School pursued during the year 2010–11 was attracting more children, junior youth, and youth to the school’s programs and encouraging them to become involved in the core activities of the Five Year Plan on their return to their home communities. Thus, for children, the school offered Camp Green Acre and a full scholarship weekend in addition to family sessions. Junior youth were offered a summer institute, a fall and a spring session of Badasht Prep, and a special “Turning 15” weekend. And especially for youth, the school continues to offer the Badasht Youth Academy and a special “Service and Leadership” weekend.

Last summer, 15 youths and their core teams were inspired by their study of *The Dawn-Breakers* during Badasht to launch a three-week campaign of teaching and service in three clusters in the Northeast. We have witnessed 377 enrollments in our children’s programs since May 2010, have experienced 328 enrollments in our youth programs, and have received excellent reviews of the *Teacher’s Toolbox*, especially the components on consultation and service projects. The new state-of-the-art climbing equipment installed in the preschool playground in June has provided a safe place for small children to play and has constructively channeled their abundant energy while they visit the campus with their families.

In keeping with the school’s continuing efforts to achieve a more outward-looking orientation, Green Acre collaborated with the townspeople of Eliot to offer an entire afternoon of activity supporting the town’s bicentennial celebration. It

featured a festive campus picnic, an original play about Eliot and Green Acre history, a historical display and timeline, and an afternoon tea with period décor—thanks to the generous aid of a resident who loaned us her lovely bone china and finely embroidered tablecloths. Over 100 residents joined more than 100 Bahá’ís in the celebration. A positive response was evident in talk heard afterward around town, including such comments as: “The Green Acre play was just marvelous, just perfect in every way,” “Yes, it always is,” “The youth were so great,” “It is so beautiful there.”

Another of the school’s important collaborations has involved the Spiritual Assembly of Eliot and the annual Sarah



Farmer Peace Award, which honors both Green Acre's founder and a different local peacemaker each year. This year's recipient was peace educator Leslie Smith—who, with her puppet, "Sammy Snail," makes presentations in schools that focus on resolving conflicts through peaceful means. In her acceptance speech, she explained that since she had been contacted by Bahá'ís, she had been more inspired and more energized about her teaching than ever before. We were reminded of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words: *"Today on this earth there are many souls who are the spreaders of peace and reconciliation and are longing for the realization of the oneness and unity of the world of man; but this intention needs a dynamic power."*

Our Bahá'í Youth Service Corps has been actively engaged in teaching, including in the scope of its efforts interfaith activities at the local university, the planning of regular devotionals, and support for children's classes and a local junior youth group. The youths continue to participate in several weekly Ruhi study circles, and two of them are enthusiastically acting as co-facilitators. These same study circles have resulted in one declaration of faith and several home visits; one young mother who was visited voiced her desire to embrace the Faith in March. The youths also take turns preparing an inspiring weekly devotional for the entire staff in their newly decorated Youth Service Corps lounge, where they deepen and enjoy fellowship. After work, they serve at a local senior center and attend weekly deepenings and study circles; they are currently studying the Universal House of Justice's letter of December 28, 2010.

The vibrant Newark Cluster from New Jersey has been making excellent use of Green Acre as an educational and spiritual resource for the past two years—this year's "People of African Descent" program brought 24 souls and an entire junior youth group together with their animators. The junior youth wholeheartedly participated in all aspects of the program and their Auxiliary Board member remarked, "It is wonderful how the Green Acre staff welcomes and loves and trusts these 'disenfranchised' youth and makes them feel noble and valued!"

Since 2008, five new buildings have been constructed on the Green Acre campus. The Staff Housing complex, with its four apartments, was completed in June 2009. October 2010 saw the opening of the Harry Randall Guest House—named after a Disciple of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Green Acre's second administrator. This building accommodates 57 guests in 12 rooms and two dorms. At present, plumbing and electrical subcontractors are hard at work on the Louis and Louisa Gregory Cottage (the school's new main office building), the Emma Rice Cottage (the school's new Youth Center), and the Rafi and Mildred Mottahedeh Cottage (the school's new library and archives). Completion of all three of these cottages is expected this fall.

As the worldwide Bahá'í community prepares for the launching of the next Five Year Plan, we feel grateful for new facilities to accommodate larger numbers of eager learners. We continue to pursue collaboration with Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í agencies in a spirit of mutual respect and advancement, and we look forward to the shaping and refining of Green Acre's programs such that guests and visitors to the school will be inspired on their return home to build flourishing and vibrant Bahá'í communities.

Since 2008, five new buildings have been constructed on the Green Acre campus. As the worldwide Bahá'í community prepares for the launching of the next Five Year Plan, we feel grateful for new facilities to accommodate larger numbers of eager learners.

In an effort to connect with like-minded organizations in the surrounding cluster, Louhelen staff and guests participated in numerous community service projects.

Louhelen Bahá'í School, Davison, Michigan

Louhelen Bahá'í School's goals are to build "an atmosphere of distinctive Bahá'í character" and to foster a "steady development of Bahá'í community life." During 2010–11, Louhelen increased the number and scope of its programs aimed at achieving these goals, which resulted in a greater awareness of several matters integrally related to community life: the international pioneering of the Faith, the Bahá'í electoral process, Ḥuqúqu'lláh, and the Bahá'í Fund.

A mini-lesson held in conjunction with family sessions highlighted the sacred duty of participating in the Bahá'í electoral process. A Ḥuqúqu'lláh representative taught lessons to children, junior youth, and youth during family and academy sessions. One evening per family session was dedicated to international pioneering; during these, a video was shown and stories were told by former pioneers. A new approach to raising funds was adopted, resulting in the gathering—between May and February—of over \$17,000 in generous contributions to the National Bahá'í Fund.

In an effort to connect with like-minded organizations in the surrounding cluster, Louhelen staff and guests participated in numerous community service projects. The Bahá'í Youth Service Corps (BYSC), together with youths from other religions, took part in the first local Interfaith Day of Service. Beginning at a local church, these youths read and sang during devotions. Afterwards, a full day of painting, yard work, and planting to clean up houses on Martin Luther King Drive was planned. Youths and participants at a Youth Eagle session were encouraged to spruce up a local park for Salem House, a local not-for-profit organization in nearby Flint. Salem House coordinators were positively impressed with these Bahá'í youths and attended the arts program that evening at Louhelen. In the fall, Louhelen offered two separate programs on "Environmental Stewardship" for junior youths and adults. Through their participation in this hands-on program, junior youths reported that they had learned about God's creation, discovered nature as a medium for meditation, and seen the importance of preserving the earth's resources. Friendships were forged during each of these community service activities.

Bahá'í Youth Service Corps members have been in the forefront of activity both at the school and in the surrounding cluster. One key activity with an outward-looking orientation was the creation—in collaboration with faculty, institutions of the Faith, and a Bahá'í student—of a weekly interfaith special interest group at the University of Michigan-Flint called "Art of Unity." On Human Rights Day 2010, the group made short presentations about the situation of the Yárán and about other human rights issues. It is currently working to broaden its scope and reach by creating a Facebook page and by developing and distributing flyers aimed at finding like-minded youths.

BYSC members participated in a commemoration of the International Day of Peace at which a member represented the Faith on a panel of clergy offering prayers



for peace. Members also participated in a local Interfaith Thanksgiving service at which readings and songs celebrating the unity of all religions were offered. Youths served at the Flint Food Bank by making donated food available for distribution to the community, and, through music, participated in the 18th Annual Diversity Day program sponsored by the National Multicultural Diversity Institute at the Flint Institute of Music.

BYSC members were an integral part of a cluster-wide activity supporting the Martin Luther King Day of Service at a local children's center. Throughout the day, members sorted, cleaned, and organized donations to the center. Members gained experience in leadership at community events, such as Feasts and Holy Days, and at staff meetings. Further, they taught children's classes and junior youth groups and served as counselors during sessions at the school for children, junior youth, and youth.

In support of the Five Year Plan expansion and consolidation work, Louhelen's "Heeding the Call" session offered skill building in teaching neighborhood children's classes. "Junior Youth Animator Training" empowered 23 new animators to enter the field of service and assist junior youth navigating through a crucial stage in life. "Teaching and Learning" topics at Louhelen's Winter School inspired the friends to become involved in the learning process and to formulate a personal teaching plan.

Throughout 2010–11, Louhelen participants experimented with strategies that would enable them to join others in the public discourse on a variety of topics. "Engaging in a Discourse on Race" brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds to share with participants their considerable experiences in this field. Love and unity abounded in the room as the friends shared the floor, openly addressing issues of race. Adults taking part in the "Environmental Stewardship" course learned to become better caretakers of the earth's precious resources. "Bahá'í Approaches to Contemporary Issues" helped participants identify strategies employing the Bahá'í writings to address contemporary problems in which paradigms are shifting and horizons are expanding.

The school's loving atmosphere inspired six individuals to make declarations of faith in the course of their participation in various programs.

Through participation in the "Environmental Stewardship" program, junior youths reported that they had learned about God's creation, discovered nature as a medium for meditation, and seen the importance of preserving the earth's resources.

NABI offers special seasonal camps for junior youth groups and animators to deepen them in the concepts relevant to their work. Youth volunteers sustain the indigenous junior youth groups at these intensive camps for spiritual empowerment.

Native American Bahá'í Institute, Houck, Arizona

Efforts at the Native American Bahá'í Institute (NABI) during 2010–11 have had a twofold focus, with one objective being to ensure Five Year Plan core activities already underway are established on a firm foundation and will be maintained into the future. A second objective has been to strengthen the pattern of expansion and consolidation within the intensive program of growth (IPG) in progress on the Navajo reservation. This has meant training indigenous teachers of children's classes, forming junior youth groups, and identifying potential junior youth empowerment program animators, as well as multiplying devotional gatherings and offering tutoring in certain skills.

In the six clusters surrounding NABI, the process for training indigenous teachers and animators is extremely slow but strongly supported by 20 Bahá'í communities from Aneth to Houck and Newlands, from Mexican Springs and Ft. Defiance to Jeddito and White Cone. Noticeable progress has been made in working with school principals, community service agencies, civic leaders, and grassroots community members who know the needs of their neighborhoods' children and junior youth. All these have offered their full and friendly cooperation, frequently bending over backward to identify potential teachers and junior youth members.

While in the Prayer Hogan, one adult observed of our children's classes, "These children are taught the most beautiful prayers. They are also taught to be reverent. I am overjoyed!" When invited to accompany us on home visits, such adults share their support and encouragement with parents, which gains their involvement. Experience has shown that our children's class students often go on to become members of junior youth groups. And if our experience proves further to be true, these same youths will eventually become animators.

Our techniques vary. We have used door-to-door teaching to find our animators and children's class teachers. The Boys and Girls Club in Ft. Defiance has subscribed to our shared vision of community building, and, every Friday, NABI youths animate junior youth groups and train animators there. We have also made efforts to form junior youth groups in rural Houck and White Cone. Through the efforts of two stalwart, hard-working pioneer-educators, the principal at the Middle School in Jeddito, Arizona, has allowed us to form junior youth groups at the school.



We also offer special seasonal camps for junior youth groups and animators to deepen them in the concepts relevant to their work. NABI's youth volunteers sustain the indigenous junior youth groups at these intensive camps for spiritual empowerment where they study *Glimmerings of Hope* and take part in art projects, sporting competitions, games, dancing, singing, and snow play—thanks to the weather! But the crowning activity is service. Rewarding remarks shared with us include: “I learned how to help others, serve others and have fun!” “We can serve God through people. It's not easy to serve people, but I love it, because when you are helping others it [gives] you joy and happiness.” And, “I learned how to dance and now I can teach others.”

Because core activities have multiplied, there has been an upsurge in teaching the Faith on the reservation during 2010–11 that has brought the community at NABI the dividends of increased vision, unity, and joy. Using the team teaching and accompaniment styles of teaching, NABI has drawn more participation from local residents, who represent a wonderful resource in the work. These resources at the local level include weavers, story tellers, cooks, teachers, and people of all trades. When these resources are included in the teaching, the confidence of our local teachers in direct teaching is greatly fortified. As a result, the clusters are experiencing a steady rate of enrollments per IPG cycle.

This experience has, in turn, led to greater consolidation. Study circles, devotional gatherings, and home visits are now more widely dispersed across our six clusters and are regularly attended by a community of interest numbering around 200. We also still hear comments—especially when a large number of friends gather for seasonal intensives on campus—testifying to the love local friends have for NABI. And every program involves service.

NABI has long been engaged in training for social action. Now, with the approval of the Navajo Nation and the local community, we have also been exploring—together with doctoral candidate Peter Bruss—community capacity building through social action focused on the environment. Participation by Burntwater community members of the Houck Chapter has been high in this multiyear initiative that aligns itself with recent Bahá'í discourse on social action and environmental stewardship.

As we prepare—in accordance with the letter from the Universal House of Justice of December 28, 2010—to assist the outlying clusters of the entire Navajo and Hopi Nations to develop programs of growth, the learning about expansion and consolidation from our one Indian intensive program of growth garnered over 22 cycles will greatly enhance our prospects. Our learning includes achieving a shared vision; embracing the institute training process; the use of pledges of action and prayer; team teaching; hosting devotionals; accompaniment of teachers and animators; and the wisdom of immediate Ruhi Book 1 training for all new believers to provide them with the fundamentals of their newly acquired Faith.

The institute process has been a great gift to American Indian communities. Training has raised the reading and comprehension skills of our Indian students and, as a result, raised their confidence! We are now able to teach our children in their own neighborhood classes and see them join junior youth groups. Next we train them as junior youth empowerment program animators and, later, as tutors. The thought that they are being empowered to enrich their own Indian communities in the future is a constant source of joy and wonder. We offer thanks to the Blessed Beauty for His divinely-ordained Universal House of Justice and the unending love and guidance it has vouchsafed to our Indian communities.

The institute process has been a great gift to American Indian communities. Training has raised the reading and comprehension skills of our Indian students and, as a result, raised their confidence!

The courses attracted 740 students, compared to 447 students last year and 359 the year before, showing that there has been almost a doubling in participation in the Institute's offerings over the last two years.

Wilmette Institute

Mission and values

The Wilmette Institute operates as a center of learning offering academic, professional, and service-oriented programs related to the Bahá'í Faith. It delivers flexible, well-organized, formally conducted programs, both online and onsite, that are designed according to standards of excellence and the Bahá'í standard of independent investigation of truth, exemplifying a spirit of humility, service, and unity. It contributes to the development of human resources within the Bahá'í community and among its friends and supporters. The Wilmette Institute's programs and services aim to enhance unity and fellowship among people of all ethnic, national, and religious backgrounds.

The Institute's Mission Statement is based on the following values:

- Pursuit of knowledge of the Bahá'í Faith
- Application of the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith to current thought and problems
- Appreciation of all aspects of diversity
- Participation in the process of community building

Online courses

During 2010–11, the Wilmette Institute offered 22 online courses, compared to 17 last year and 19 the year before. The courses attracted 740 students, compared to 447 students last year and 359 the year before, showing that there has been almost a doubling in participation in the Institute's offerings over the last two years. Further, this accounting does not include the 100 learners who participated in free training courses centered on the annual education theme in spring 2010. The Institute's growth has enabled it to expand services while remaining independent of the National Bahá'í Fund.

Among the Institute's offerings during 2010–11 were courses that focused on:

- *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters* and *One Common Faith*, reflecting recent study priorities set by the Universal House of Justice.
- *Revelation & Social Reality*, which was offered in response to the National Spiritual Assembly's call that the friends study this book—written by Universal House of Justice member Paul Lample—in the permanent and seasonal Bahá'í schools.
- “How to Study the Bahá'í Writings,” actually a series of seven courses aimed at providing Bahá'ís with the specific skills necessary to read the Bahá'í authoritative texts—the writings of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi—with clarity and thoroughness.
- Studying other religions and scriptures—through a total of five course offerings—and relating them to the Faith.

- Introducing National and Local Assembly archivists from around the world to concepts, methods, and best practices for creating and maintaining Bahá'í archives.

Courses during 2010–11 attracted an average of 34 learners; the average was 26 last year. This is the highest enrollment ever, reflecting the impact of the new Cvent registration system. Learners from outside the United States came from 36 countries and territories, and constituted 118—or 15 percent—of the year's total of 740 learners. Their numbers dropped slightly compared to the year before, when 125 overseas learners participated. Developing ways to market the Institute's courses overseas remains an important challenge.

Learners came from Australia (9), Brazil (4), Cameroon (12), Canada (26), China (3), Costa Rica (1), Cyprus (1), France (3), French Polynesia (1), Greece (1), Hungary (1), Iceland (1), India (1), Iran (2), Ireland (3), Israel (6), Jamaica (2), Japan (5), Jordan (2), Kyrgyzstan (1), Malaysia (2), Marshall Islands (1), Micronesia (4), Netherlands (1), New Zealand (2), Poland (4), Portugal (3), South Africa (2), Suriname (1), Switzerland (1), Taiwan (2), Tanzania (1), Thailand (1), Turkey (1), United Kingdom (1), and the U.S. Virgin Islands (1).

All the Institute's courses for the year were designed to foster a culture of learning in the Bahá'í community. About half our learners were members of local study groups. A significant fraction of Institute students are trained as Ruhi tutors or have taken Ruhi courses. Many are using Wilmette Institute information in their classes.

Reorganization

The Wilmette Institute Board was reappointed with three new members in June and has held seven telephone meetings and one face-to-face meeting. It has approved a revised statement of mission and values. To date the Board has appointed two Task Forces to facilitate its work.

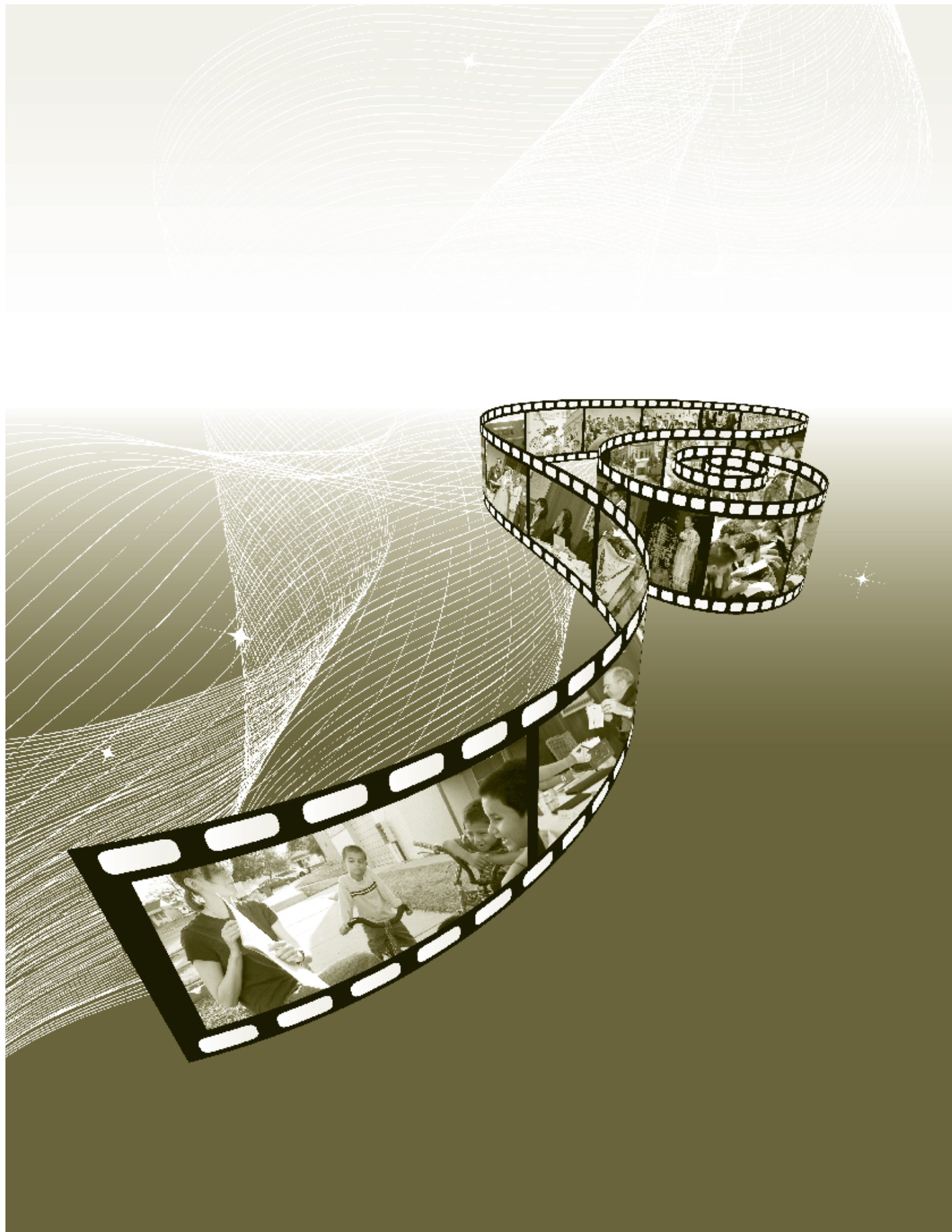
Service to the Five Year Plan and the Bahá'í community

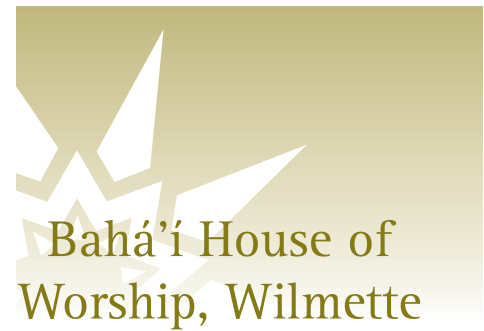
The Institute continues to provide valuable support for the Five Year Plan and its core activities. Its students have used course information to proclaim the Faith to Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and Zoroastrians; explain the writings of Bahá'u'lláh to friends and seekers alike; clarify points of Bahá'í history in Ruhi Book 4 classes; enrich their children's and youth classes; read the Bahá'í writings with greater clarity and depth; transform themselves as a result of a greater understanding of the human condition; and pursue new avenues of Bahá'í scholarship and writing. The Institute continues to explore ways it can create a dynamic coherence of learning, teaching, social action, and dialogue about pressing social problems in order to enhance the Faith's standing in the world.

The Institute strives for a dynamic coherence of learning, teaching, social action, and dialogue about pressing social problems in order to enhance the Faith's standing in the world.

Wilmette Institute online course offerings, 2010–11

	Learners	Groups
Building the Fortress: Marriage and Family Life	54	5
Epistle to the Son of the Wolf	26	2
Science and Religion	43	1
Buddhism for Deepening and Dialogue	27	1
Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation: A Systematic Survey	33	1
<i>The Secret of Divine Civilization</i>	15	0
How to Study the Bahá'í Writings	43	5
Zoroastrianism for Deepening and Dialogue	28	0
The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters	13	0
The Writings of the Báb	16	0
Introduction to Archives for Bahá'í Archivists	22	1
<i>Revelation and Social Reality</i>	41	7
Ministry of Shoghi Effendi	33	1
Bahá'u'lláh's Early Mystic Writings	42	4
Islam for Deepening and Dialogue	47	6
Qur'án	44	4
Exploring the Christian New Testament	21	0
<i>One Common Faith</i>	39	0
Bahá'í Theology	43	5
How to Study the Bahá'í Writings	32	0
Health and Spirituality	48	5
<i>The Promised Day is Come</i>	30	4
Total	740	52





House of Worship Activities Office

The year 2010–11 saw the existing Visitors' Center at the Bahá'í House of Worship once again in full operation, busy and active in providing, in every way possible, a welcoming environment for the constant stream of our thousands of guests, enabling them to learn more about the history and features of this majestic Mother Temple of the West and the unifying Faith it both serves and symbolizes.

Staff in the Activities Office has had to adapt to a necessary subtraction in its numbers. The office now has a staff of seven, down considerably from the 12 of a few years ago. The office has come to rely increasingly on help from wonderful volunteers from Bahá'í communities throughout the Chicago metropolitan area. The number of visitors this coming summer may well exceed typical numbers for the summer months, which will further stretch the office's resources. The office is therefore developing mechanisms to make more effective use of the volunteer resource, with a new database, with online opportunities to offer service, and with Activities Office staff making visits to local Bahá'í communities to explain our

needs.

The House of Worship continues to provide brief devotional programs twice daily, in the morning and afternoon, with a half-hour program on Sundays; all are open to the general public. The Temple continues to be an invaluable asset in the work of teaching the Faith. Its matchless beauty and serene atmosphere open the hearts of inquiring souls, presenting staff and volunteers with a unique opportunity to teach the Faith directly. The spark of interest has first been lit

103 ...House of Worship Activities Office

106 ...House of Worship Music Department

House of Worship statistics, Feb. 1, 2010 to Jan. 31, 2011

Devotions in auditorium	495
Total attendance at devotions	15,133
Volunteer hours	7,397.75
Tours	161
Total attendance at tours	4,241
Visitors through the vestibule	253,320
Visitors through the Visitors' Center	157,492
Wedding interviews	39
Student interviews	67
Memorial interviews	2
English interest cards collected	80
Spanish interest cards collected	2
Declarations	8
Weddings	19
Bookshop sales, cash	268,389.78
Bookshop sales, on account	2,141.42

Since 1932, it is estimated there have been more than 10,000,000 visitors to the House of Worship.

The office has come to rely increasingly on help from wonderful volunteers from Bahá'í communities throughout the Chicago metropolitan area. The number of visitors this coming summer may well exceed typical numbers for the summer months, which will further stretch the office's resources.

The Activities Office staff works to encourage and facilitate further investigation of the Faith, whenever possible by putting visitors in touch with the Bahá'í community in their home neighborhoods.

in a many a seeker's heart through an inspiring visit to the Temple. The Activities Office staff works to encourage and facilitate further investigation of the Faith, whenever possible by putting visitors in touch with the Bahá'í community in their home neighborhoods. Other teaching opportunities abound, often experienced in the many young students from high schools and colleges appearing at the office door wanting to conduct interviews, and in the large groups requesting guided tours.

Efforts to integrate work at the House of Worship with the Five Year Plan core activities and the institute training process continue. For the past year, the office has held a monthly class for children of all ages in Foundation Hall. The friends with a desire to improve their teaching skills are always welcome to come to the Temple to guide, an experience that invariably leads to extended conversations with visitors interested in knowing more about the Faith. For those "arising to serve," there are opportunities for accompaniment and for youth and junior youth to participate. Children are also welcome to participate, when accompanied by older volunteers.

Guests are continually drawn to the six beautiful visual displays on the walls of the Visitors' Center, which have now been in place for three years. An evaluation process has been conducted through visitors' observations, interviews, and online surveys. Results of this survey are available and have assisted deliberations on ways to improve the effectiveness of future displays in the Visitors' Center and in the new Visitors' Center, currently under construction (see concept illustration below) and scheduled for completion in 2014.





Bahá'í House of Worship

Overall Architect: CFA Design Services; Wallwork Scaffolding; F&B Design Group; Glass & Concrete

Now, at last, the House of Worship's rear service entrance will be reconstructed in a manner that will bring it into befitting conformity with the majesty and beauty of the rest of the building.

In June 2010, the walls that surrounded the Cornerstone—which had created a secluded room where visitors could quietly reflect and pray—gave way to an open space in which this storied object could be proudly displayed for all to see. The National Spiritual Assembly is reviewing a proposal to construct a visual history around the Cornerstone. This would consist of illustrated panels relating the Cornerstone's history and significance and helping visitors to better understand the sacredness of the House of Worship, the vision that fired the then relatively small Bahá'í community to begin the long endeavor to build it, and the many sacrifices that were required to complete it. The renovated space will make the fascinating story of the Temple accessible to all, a piece of Bahá'í history that can be shared with everyone.

Another renovation scheduled to get under way in the coming year is the approved makeover for the House of Worship's rear service entrance. This has been the Temple's least attractive feature for many years. Now, at last, it will be reconstructed in a manner that will bring it into befitting conformity with the majesty and beauty of the rest of the building. Work will begin in June 2011 and is scheduled for completion by the end of October (see illustration above).

Including devotions and teaching, the Activities Office staff attempts to keep daily, weekly, and monthly records of activities, attendance, volunteer hours, interest in the Faith, and declarations of faith. Please see statistics in the chart on page 103.

The choir has maintained a roster of approximately 40 singers on average, with recruitment for new singers generally taking place each year in September and January.

House of Worship Music Department

On the first three Sundays of each month, the Bahá'í House of Worship (HOW) Choir provides a selection of a cappella music based on the sacred scriptures of the world's major religions for the Temple's regular 12:30 p.m. devotionals. In addition, the choir provides music for the several Bahá'í Holy Days and for the varied special programs held at the House of Worship in the course of a year.

The choir has maintained a roster of approximately 40 singers on average, with recruitment for new singers generally taking place each year in September and January. During 2010–11, the average number of singers participating in the choir's increasing number of engagements in the larger community rose to approximately 24 singers, which allows for some absences. While it is, for the most part, an a cappella singing ensemble, the choir occasionally uses instrumental accompaniment and movement when it goes out into the community to sing for churches and at other events. Both a quartet and an octet have emerged from the choir's membership, formed through the initiative of members able to sing a variety of music beyond the choir's strict requirements. This past year, the Music Director was able to rely on several members of the choir to fill in for him when he was unable to be present for devotional services. This has strengthened the choir's ability to be present for all its expected performances.

Outreach performances

During 2010–11, the choir performed at the following local venues and events:

- 115th Anniversary, Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Evanston, Illinois (our third invitation).
- Human Rights Day Forum on Persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran, cosponsored by Amnesty International, at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

The choir also participated in three Thanksgiving services:

- Wilmette Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, Beth Hillel Synagogue, Wilmette, Illinois
- DuPage Interfaith Resource Network Thanksgiving Service, St. Procopius Abbey, Benedictine University, Lisle, Illinois
- Evanston Interfaith Action Thanksgiving Service, Evanston Unitarian Church, Evanston, Illinois

Annual Bahá'í Choral Music Festival

A highlight of the year 2010–11 was the Fourth Annual Bahá'í Choral Music Festival, which featured the joyful contributions of approximately 190 singers. The festival culminated with two free concerts in the House of Worship on the last Sunday of May 2010, garnering record attendance. Numerous articles appeared in Chicago's and other local newspapers both before and after the concerts. More



The Annual Bahá'í Choral Music Festivals have come to be eagerly looked-forward-to by the Temple's many neighbors and friends.

than 230 singers have already registered for the upcoming Fifth Annual Choral Music Festival. The festivals have been advertised widely throughout Chicago's North Shore communities and have come to be eagerly looked-forward-to by the Temple's many neighbors and friends.

New choir website

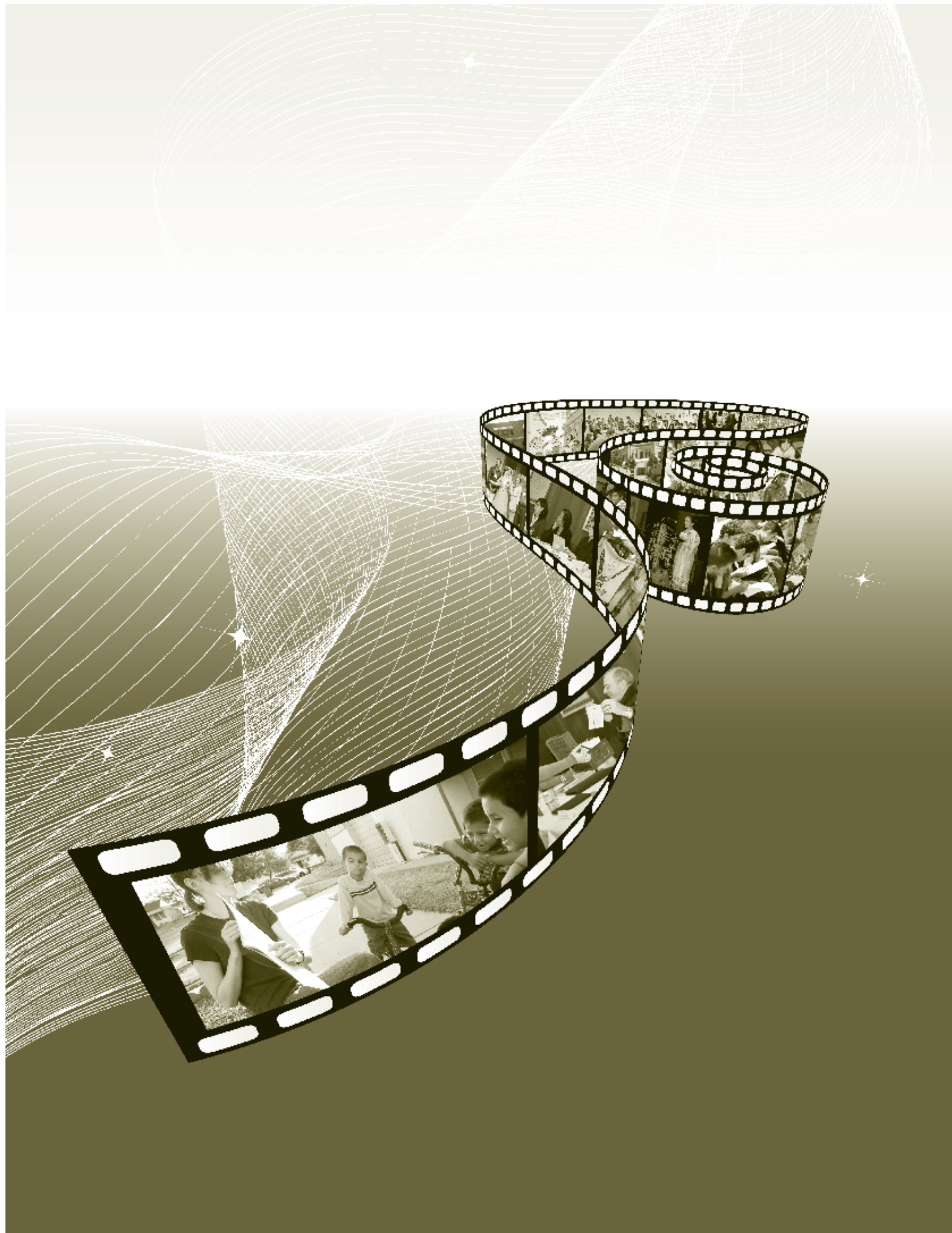
For the first time, a complete website (www.bahaichoir.org) allows the public direct access to information about the House of Worship Choir, the Choral Music Festival, and the Bahá'í Faith. Throughout 2010–11, the site has been used for registrations for the festival and for providing information about it and about the choir. The idea for a website was born nearly two years ago, and it is now operational thanks to the efforts of several members of the choir.

Activities of the music director

The music director participated widely in local and national programs sponsored by Bahá'í communities and others during 2010–11, either by performing or offering workshops:

- Soloist, India Tour with the Voices of Bahá, Summer 2010
- Soloist, Bahá'í Conference on Social & Economic Development, Orlando, Florida
- Soloist, Grand Canyon Bahá'í Conference, Phoenix, Arizona
- Conductor, Gospel Music Workshop, Los Angeles, California
- Conductor, Gospel and Choral Music Workshop, Green Acre Bahá'í School, Maine
- Conductor, Gospel Music Workshop, Louhelen Bahá'í School, Michigan
- Conductor, Gospel Music Workshop, Chautauqua Institution, New York

In addition, the music director attended the National Conference of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), held in March 2011 in Chicago.





Bahá'í Publishing Trust and Distribution Service

During 2010–11, the Bahá'í Publishing Trust and Distribution Service continued to improve efficiencies, to reduce costs, and to make changes that will position the business to grow. Most notable among these changes is the hiring of a new sales representative group to represent Bahá'í Publishing in the northeast portion of the United States. This change will make it possible for Bahá'í Publishing to expand its presence among booksellers and distributors in the trade market, as well as with major sellers in the library and academic markets.

We are also looking forward to launching our first eBooks into the market, with 25 titles planned for the coming year. The Publishing Trust intends to develop a line of high-quality, leather/hardbound editions of Bahá'í sacred and authoritative texts. It has been a long time since the Trust has produced such books, which we believe has created an unfulfilled demand within the Bahá'í community. Printers have been located who can produce high-quality editions at the print-run level and price-point we need. Further, we plan to explore new ways to contact our retail customers to better inform them of new books and products as they become available.

Efforts during the coming year will be more focused on our products and on our customers than on operational efficiencies.

Several new works and new editions were issued by the Publishing Trust during 2010–11 under the Trust's three imprints. The Bahá'í Publishing Trust (BPT) imprint released a number of new works or editions, including Bahá'í Wall Calendar, 168 B.E.; Bahá'í Datebook, 168 B.E.; and *Messages from the Universal House of Justice: 1986–2001*.

The Bahá'í Publishing (BP) imprint released 10 new titles: *America's Sacred Calling: Building a New Spiritual Reality*, by John Fitzgerald Medina; *Founders of Faith: The Parallel Lives of God's Messengers*, by Harold Rosen; *Spirit of Faith: The Oneness of God*, compiled by Bahá'í Publishing; *Promises Fulfilled: Christianity, Islam, and the Bahá'í Faith*, by Nabil Hanna; *Fountain of Wisdom: A Collection of Writings from Bahá'u'lláh*; *Compassionate Woman: The Life and Legacy of Patricia Locke*, by John Kolstoe; *Rejoice in My Gladness: The Life of Táhirih*, by Janet Ruhe-Schoen; *Spirit of Faith: The Oneness of Religion*, compiled by Bahá'í Publishing; *Talks by 'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Eternal Covenant*, compiled by Bahá'í Publishing; and *The Quickening: Unknown Poetry of Táhirih*, by John S. Hatcher and Amrollah Hemmat.

The Publishing Trust was also pleased to announce the release of two new publications under the Bellwood Press imprint for children, junior youth, and youth. They are: *Kyle Jeffries, Pilgrim*, by Gail Radley, with illustrations by Taurus Burns; and *Voyage of Love: 'Abdu'l-Bahá in North America*, by Amy Renshaw.

The Publishing Trust also completed work on 10 reprints that included *Prayers*

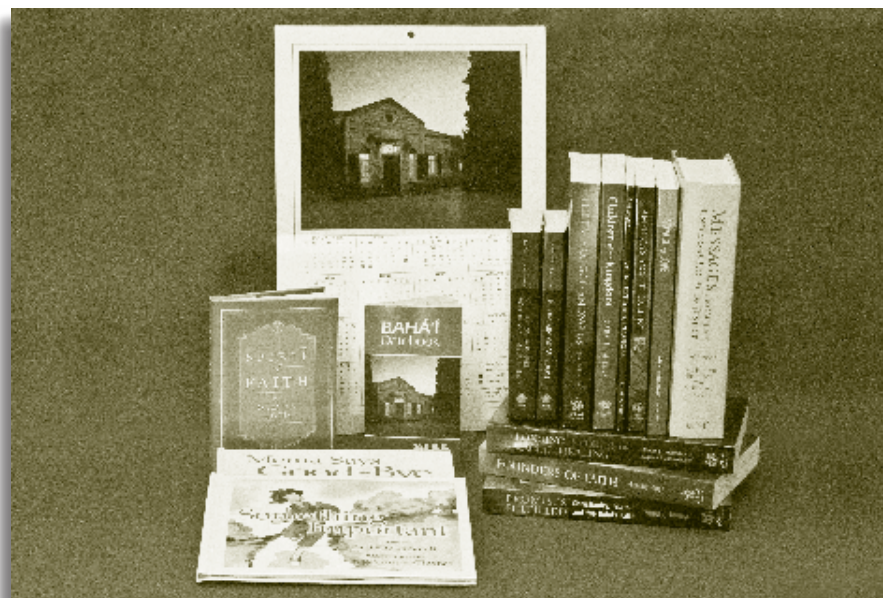
109 ...Bahá'í Publishing Trust and Distribution Service

111 ...*Brilliant Star*

113 ...*World Order*

We are looking forward to launching our first eBooks into the market, with 25 titles planned for the coming year.

The Publishing Trust currently has 18 new projects in development under the Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Bahá'í Publishing, and Bellwood Press imprints. Some 10 reprint projects will be under way over the next few months.



and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh; God Speaks Again; Life at First Sight; Creative Dimensions of Suffering; O God Guide Me; God Passes By; Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era; Bahá'í Prayers (leather edition); Founders of Faith; and Illumine My Spirit.

The Publishing Trust currently has 18 new projects in development under the Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Bahá'í Publishing, and Bellwood Press imprints. Some 10 reprint projects will be under way over the next few months.

The Publishing Trust will continue to focus its acquisitions activities on developing materials that support the goals of the current Five Year Plan and directly support the teaching work.

The Bahá'í Distribution Service (BDS) continued to serve as the distribution arm of the Publishing Trust and the primary distributor for Bahá'í World Center Publications. BDS also provides the majority of product fulfillment to the national Bahá'í schools and provides subscriber services for *Brilliant Star*, *World Order*, *One Country*, and *U.S. Bahá'í Newsreel*, as well as for international subscriptions to *The American Bahá'í*.

During the past year, the Distribution Service provided a bookstore for the Bahá'í Conference on Social and Economic Development held in Orlando, Florida. The Distribution Service processed nearly 8,000 orders this past fiscal year.

Brilliant Star

Throughout 2010–11, *Brilliant Star* continued to support the Five Year Plan and to advance its mission to educate and inspire children and junior youth around the globe. The magazine serves as an engaging teaching tool for families and communities, empowering children and junior youth to develop their Bahá'í identities, build spiritual strengths, and share their faith. It is also a valuable source of educational materials for Bahá'í children's classes. The enthusiastic comments the magazine receives confirm these efforts. One family wrote: "We love your magazine! We have been living in Ethiopia ... since August 2009 and it is truly a highlight of our life when we get a new issue of *Brilliant Star*! We especially love Lightning and Luna! ... Thank you for all that you do!"

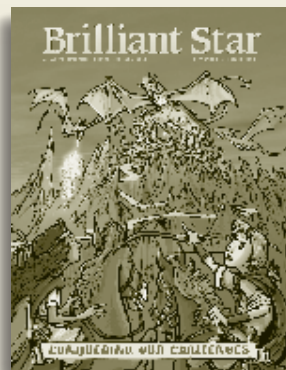
Another reader remarked: "*Brilliant Star* is the finest children's publication in the world and well deserves the many awards it has received. Its delightful stories, beautiful illustrations, poems and suggested activities, inspire children to serve others, celebrate diversity, think creatively, and recognize their spiritual nature."

We also receive helpful insights from our young international advisory group, the Trailblazers, and from online surveys.

One said: "I get really excited when I get a new *Brilliant Star* magazine. I also feel happy that I can receive it. I feel part of a community and empowered by the lessons in the magazine."

And another: "I like the Radiant Stars and learning about other Bahá'ís. I have learned a lot about the Bahá'í Faith from *Brilliant Star*!"

Six issues were released during 2010–11: "Paths of Diversity" (May/June 2010), "Express Yourself" (July/August 2010), "Conquering Our Challenges" (September/October 2010), "Rays of One Sun" (November/December 2010), "Power of Youth" (January/February 2011), and "Exploring Mysteries" (March/April 2011). "*Brilliant Star's* Treasure Box" was also produced for five issues of *The American Bahá'í*, to support core activities in families and communities.



One reader re-
marked: "*Brilliant
Star is the finest chil-
dren's publication in
the world and well de-
serves the many awards
it has received.*"

Brilliant Star Online, our interactive website, has the potential to significantly contribute to the new Five Year Plan by enabling *Brilliant Star* to reach a far wider global audience as a tool for teaching the Faith.

Brilliant Star's compelling art, stories, activities, music, interviews, and comics appeal to children and junior youth of all faiths with diverse learning styles and interests. It fosters a spirit of service, a love of learning, and confidence in conversing about spiritual topics. Our "Radiant Stars" feature connects readers with young Bahá'ís around the globe, many of whom describe their participation in core activities, including children's classes, junior youth groups, study circles, and devotional gatherings.

The magazine's editorial content and graphics quality continue to receive positive responses from the publishing industry. In 2010, the Religion Communicators Council (RCC) recognized *Brilliant Star* for the fifth time, this year with a DeRose-Hinkhouse Certificate of Merit for the magazine's six 2009 issues. The RCC also honored Designer/Illustrator C. Aaron Kreader with a Best of Class award and an Award of Excellence for his cover art for the July/August 2009 issue, "Changing the World." In addition, the magazine received a fourth APEX Award for Publication Excellence, this time for Green Writing in its March/April 2009 issue, "Caring for Our Planet." This issue reflected the magazine's commitment to promoting environmental awareness and action. It was *Brilliant Star's* sixth issue in observance of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2005–2014.

Outreach to communities of interest is integral to *Brilliant Star's* mission. Environmentally themed issues are shared by the National Spiritual Assembly's Office of External Affairs in their nongovernmental organization (NGO) liaison work addressing the issue of sustainable development. The magazine also connects with award-winning scientists, environmental activists, and musicians, including them in its "We Are One" and "Music Café" features. Complimentary copies are distributed at conferences and large gatherings—including Chicago's annual Bud Billiken Parade, a celebration of children and race unity.

A critical tool for helping *Brilliant Star* further the process of entry by troops is *Brilliant Star* Online, our interactive website (www.brilliantstarmagazine.org). The website has the potential to significantly contribute to the new Five Year Plan by enabling *Brilliant Star* to reach a far wider global audience as a tool for teaching the Faith. It will also offer a greater diversity of materials to support the core activities of the Plan. Work on the website had been on hold for three years, but its budget was reinstated in 2010, leading to new strategic development.

Brilliant Star continues to seek major improvements in its marketing and distribution. In recent years, the magazine lost many subscribers as a result of challenges with its subscription fulfillment system. While it once had subscribers in over 80 countries, *Brilliant Star* currently reaches only about 40 countries. *Brilliant Star* Online will be key to increasing the magazine's global distribution. In addition, in one bulk subscription initiative, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Arab Emirates provides complimentary subscriptions for the Bahá'í children in their country.

As we reflect on our work over the past year, the *Brilliant Star* staff is deeply grateful to have had the opportunity to contribute to the progress of the Five Year Plan now concluding and to assist readers, in the Universal House of Justice's words, in "sharpening their spiritual perception, enhancing their powers of expression and reinforcing moral structures that will serve them throughout their lives."

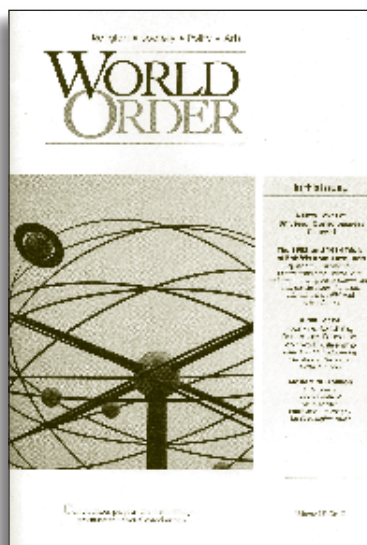
World Order

Following the National Spiritual Assembly's decision early in 2011 to bring to a close the work of the Task Force it had appointed to formulate plans for publishing *World Order* online, it asked the magazine's Managing Editor, Dr. Betty J. Fisher, to prepare *World Order's* extensive files for permanent archival storage and to research and summarize in writing the magazine's long and commendable history.

Research on the history of the magazine proved especially rewarding, as the Task Force found that in the first decade of the 20th century, only 18 years after the Bahá'í Faith had been introduced to North America, a Persian Bahá'í had expressed the desire for a general literary magazine. That wish was not realized when *Bahai News*, a magazine primarily for Bahá'ís, was launched in 1910 (and renamed *Star of the West* in 1911). In 1922, Shoghi Effendi wrote that he wished *The Bahá'í Magazine* (the name given to *Star of the West* that same year) would become “more and more universal so as to interest all those who are working for universal brotherhood, religion and peace.” In 1924, it began to publish less Bahá'í news and more literary articles. In 1927, Horace Holley and other Bahá'ís collaborated with a liberal New York minister in publishing *World Unity Magazine*, a magazine aimed at interpreting and recording “those significant changes in present-day thought which mark the trend toward worldwide understanding.”

When the magazine went bankrupt during the Great Depression, it was offered to the National Spiritual Assembly and continued to publish until March 1935. In April 1935, the National Assembly merged *World Unity* with *The Bahá'í Magazine*, and both magazines began a new life as *World Order*. In January 1949, in an effort to ensure funds were available to complete the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette, Shoghi Effendi asked that publication of the magazine be suspended, initially for two years and, later, until the dedication of the House of Worship in 1953.

In Fall 1966, *World Order*, second series, was revived under the editorship of Firuz Kazemzadeh and published until March 2009. The quarterly magazine focused on topics of broad social concern from a Bahá'í perspective, aiming to “stimulate, inspire, and serve its readers in their search to understand the relationships between contemporary life and contemporary religious teachings and philosophy.”

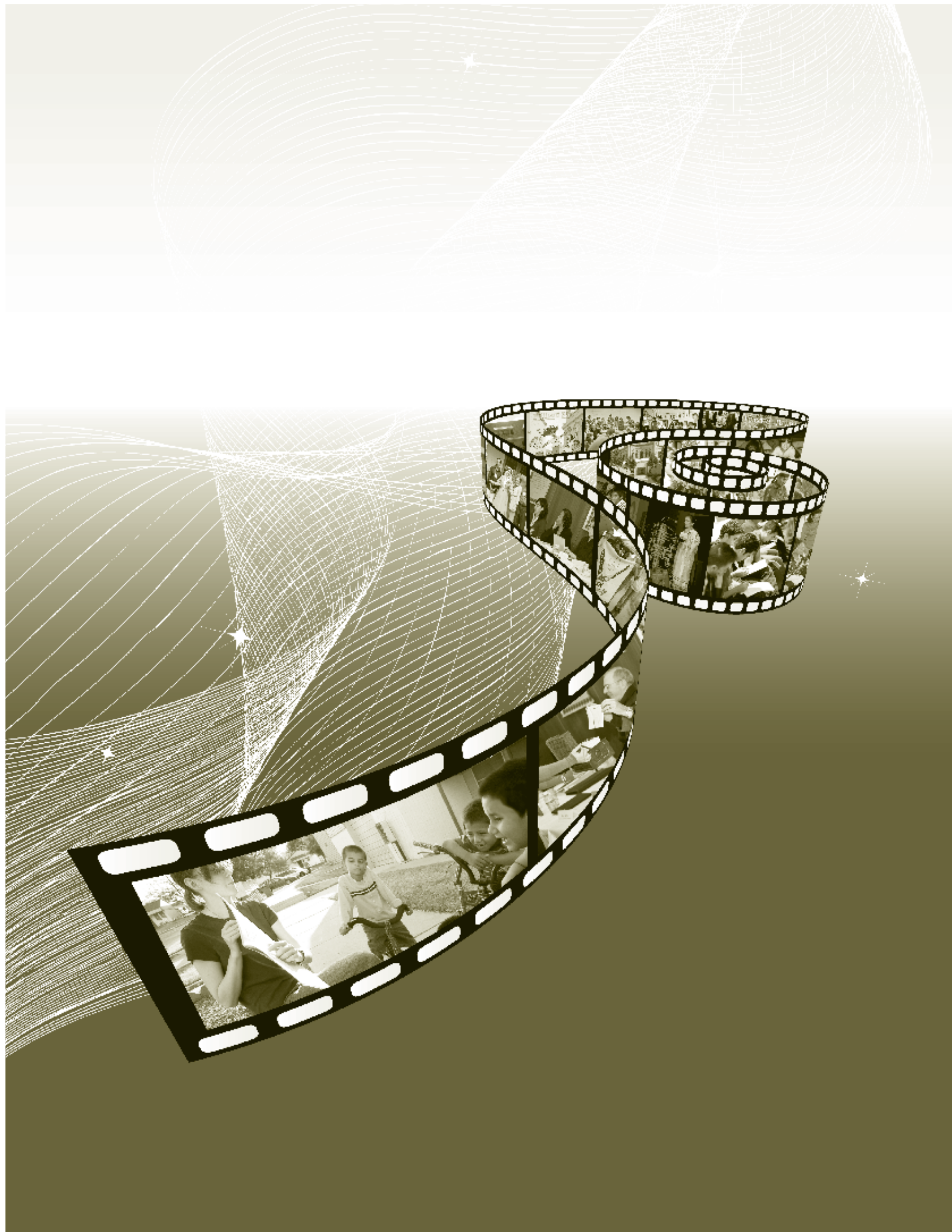


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The National Spiritual Assembly wishes to thank those who have supported the magazine, whether as subscribers, readers, authors, poets, reviewers, artists, photographers, or silent contributors of funds.

The National Spiritual Assembly and its Office of External Affairs sent some 300 copies of each issue to national contacts, the U.S. United Nations Office shared the magazine with international contacts, and Bahá'í public information representatives used issues for reaching local and state contacts.

As *World Order*, second series, concludes well over four decades of publication, the National Spiritual Assembly wishes to thank those who have supported the magazine, whether as subscribers, readers, authors, poets, reviewers, artists, photographers, or silent contributors of funds. Having been asked by the National Assembly to provide one last service—to prepare a how-to manual for running a magazine—the *World Order* Task Force has expressed its hope that this effort may assist others to one day revive the magazine for a third time, under whatever name and in whatever format. Perhaps in another time and another form, the magazine can aid the Bahá'í community as it becomes, in the words of the Universal House of Justice, “increasingly involved in the life of society” and contributes to the Faith’s efforts to “effect a transformation of society, remoulding its institutions and processes, on a scale never before witnessed.”





National Bahá'í Archives

The National Bahá'í Archives, being responsible for preservation of sacred writings and historical and administrative documents of the Bahá'í Faith, does not directly support the core activities of the Five Year Plan but supports the work of the Bahá'í National Center, other Bahá'í institutions, and individual researchers.

One important task of the Archives staff is answering reference requests from Bahá'í National Center offices, other Bahá'í institutions, and individuals. During 2010–11, the staff handled 746 reference requests, a 31 percent increase from the 566 of the previous year. Of these requests, 56 percent were from Bahá'í institutions, while the rest were from individuals. The Archives is assisting the task force planning the 2012 House of Worship Laying of the Cornerstone Commemoration. National Center staff checked out 2,200 photographs from the Archives Photograph Collection and 153 books from the National Bahá'í Library. Further, the Archives supplied a total of 13,464 photocopies of archival and library material, 288 digital copies of photographs, 103 digital copies of documents or library material, and one CD.

The Archives staff provided archival advice to 10 local communities in nine states, plus one local community in New Zealand, as well as to the National Bahá'í Archives of Denmark and Canada. The archivist was lead faculty for the Wilmette Institute online course Introduction to Archives for Bahá'í Archivists, which is held every other year. The course had students working in 10 local Bahá'í archives in Arkansas, California, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Nevada, Texas, and Washington, and three national Bahá'í archives (Cyprus, Japan, Marshall Islands).

Seventeen researchers visited the Archives in person during the year. Among the popular research topics were the visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to America, Robert Hayden, and Sarah Farmer. Several researchers were conducting research for academic degrees. One book published in 2010—*Lighting the Western Sky: The Hearst Pilgrimage and the Establishment of the Bahá'í Faith in the West*, by Kathryn Jewett Hogenson—used collections from the Archives. The number of visitors touring the Archives was 753, back to a more customary level after two years of low attendance. A special relics display was set up for the annual Choral Music Festival to handle the large number in attendance. The Archives has loaned the larger of its two Temple models to the Properties Office for use in the new Bahá'í House of Worship cornerstone area displays. The archivist continued to develop content for the planned Archives public website.

Much of the work of the Archives staff involves acquisition, processing, and preservation of archival and library material. The Archives staff made 34 acquisition inquiries and processed 142 new accessions during 2010–11, totaling 155 linear feet—including 14 original letters from the Guardian and 79 boxes of Bahá'í National Center records. The Archives received 13 new collections of personal papers, including the Julie L. Regal Papers, Mabel Garis Papers, Juana C. Conrad Papers,

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121 ...Office of Review

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and Lorana Kerfoot Papers. It also received additional material for 14 existing collections, including the Doris McKay Papers, Corinne True Family Papers, Kay Zinky Papers, Barbara Bray West Papers, and Ramona Allen Brown Papers.

The Archives staff processed 92 boxes of Bahá'í National Center files, including records of the Office of the Secretary, Office of the Treasurer, Office of Communications, Office of Assembly Development, Office of Education and Schools, Persian-American Affairs Office, National Youth Committee/Youth Office, and Green Acre Bahá'í School. The Archives also processed or added material to 24 collections of personal papers. Significant collections processed or added to included the Margaret K. Ruhe Papers, Beth Newport Papers, Mabel Garis Papers, Julie L. Regal Papers, D. Thelma Jackson Papers, Doris McKay Papers, and Leroy Ioas Papers. Other material processed by the Archives staff were 14 original letters from the Guardian, 246 photographs, 53 CDs, 2 DVDs, 40 audiotapes, 4 videotapes, 52 rolls of microfilm, and 13 architectural drawings. The Archives had 69 audiotapes digitized and transferred to CDs. The staff added 1,166 items to the National Bahá'í Library—including local bulletins from 37 communities or clusters in 24 states—and cataloged 1,036 periodicals.

Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project

In its second year, the Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project website, launched in April 2009, continues to prove its relevance in the context of the current and future Five Year Plans. As the Universal House of Justice made clear in a letter written on its behalf in April 24, 2008: “Far from being a diversion from the worldwide effort to advance the process of entry by troops, Bahá'í scholarship can be a powerful reinforcement to that endeavour and a valuable source of new enquirers.”

Positive comments about the Encyclopedia Project website continue to flow from readers around the world:

- “Awesome . . . a fantastic companion to ‘Ocean.’”
- “Isn’t this a wonderful resource!”
- “I had a quick look at it and will certainly be going back for more.”
- “Splendid article on Keith Ransom-Kehler.”
- “A solid source of information on the Faith.”

Many have recently discovered the website. Others are gradually exploring its contents: a selection of articles about Bahá'í institutions, laws, and teachings; Bahá'í history; and individuals, such as Disciples of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Hands of the Cause of God, who have played an especially notable historic role.

Traffic on the website has increased exponentially. The number of hits for the article “Hands of the Cause of God,” written by Eunice Braun and the editors—currently the most read—increased by over 350 percent from late 2009 to late 2010 and another 30 percent in just three months from November 2010 to February 2011. Among other most-read articles are “‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás” by Firuz Kazemzadeh, “Mashriqu’l-Adhkár” by Julie Badiée and the editors, “Bahá'í World Center” and “Tehran” by Moojan Momen, “Dunn, Clara, and Dunn, John Henry Hyde” by Graham Hassall, “Letters

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At present, work is carried forward on the basis of volunteer service and part-time editing supported wholly by earmarked contributions. The development of this valuable resource thus depends on direct support by the Bahá'í community.

of the Living” by the editors, “Gregory, Louis George” by Gayle Morrison, and “Ransom-Kehler, Keith Bean” by Janet Ruhe-Schoen.

A number of articles on the website are being updated, and several new articles are in the final stages of editing. Various improvements to the site are being made. Information on the Encyclopedia Project has been disseminated to visitors to the Bahá'í National Center and to participants at the 2010 annual conference of the Association for Bahá'í Studies held in Vancouver, Canada, and correspondence and telephone calls directed to the project have been handled.

Work has continued even though the Encyclopedia Project, having been downsized by the National Spiritual Assembly in late 2008 as a cost-saving measure during the world economic crisis, has neither an office nor a full-time staff. At present, work is carried forward on the basis of volunteer service and part-time editing supported wholly by earmarked contributions. The development of this valuable resource thus depends on direct support by the Bahá'í community.

The Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project welcomes comments and inquiries (at encyclopedia@usbnc.org) and encourages exploration of its website (at www.bahai-encyclopedia-project.org/).

Office of Review

The literature review process was initiated by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as a temporary measure to protect the Bahá’í Faith while in its early stages of development. This requirement has been continued to date by the Guardian and by the Universal House of Justice, which, in a letter dated December 29, 1988, wrote: “[F]ar from adopting a carefree attitude, the community must be conscious of the necessity to present a correct view of itself and an accurate understanding of its purpose to a largely skeptical public.”

While still a temporary measure, pre-publication review continues to ensure that works produced by Bahá’í authors and artists represent the Bahá’í Faith accurately and with dignity. A third criterion is timeliness—for example, whether there is anything about the publication of the work at this time that might increase the danger to which the Bahá’í community is exposed in certain parts of the world.

The review of literature and audiovisual materials (including music) is carried out by the Office of Review, in collaboration with a Review Task Force appointed by the National Spiritual Assembly and with a growing network of reviewers around the country. Local Assemblies are responsible for reviewing literature that is for local use only, as well as all “special materials” (such as artwork and graphic creations, greeting cards, jewelry, and T-shirts) produced by individuals in their jurisdiction, whether intended for local or national distribution.

In general, the policy of review does not apply to the Internet medium, particularly personal websites and blogs, where content is amenable to easy change and revision, individual initiative is strongly encouraged, and learning through trial and error is valued. In the case of more formal undertakings, such as an online journal that has institutional sponsorship of some kind, the spirit of the policy of review would still obtain. Of course, online publication should not be sought in order to circumvent the obligation of review, nor to publish certain translations or historical works which are subject to special protective review requirements.

A learning process

Among the aims of the office are to instill a consultative approach to review, to educate authors and artists new to the process about review standards and purposes, and to foster a spirit of collaboration among all involved. As the Universal House of Justice has remarked, in a letter dated December 10, 1992, Bahá’ís should look upon review “in this early stage in the development of the Faith ... [as] a species of peer review which they welcome, since it is primarily among their fellow Bahá’ís that they would find at this time those who would have sufficiently wide and deep understanding of the Faith and its Teachings to raise issues of importance which they would want to consider before publication.”

The expanding, open-ended network of reviewers consists primarily of authors and artists who have themselves submitted materials for review, thus continually

Among the aims of the office are to instill a consultative approach to review, to educate authors and artists new to the process about review standards and purposes, and to foster a spirit of collaboration among all involved.

The Review Office received approximately 185 submissions during 2010–11, continuing the pattern of small increases year to year. Roughly 80 percent of submissions are literature, 20 percent audiovisual materials.

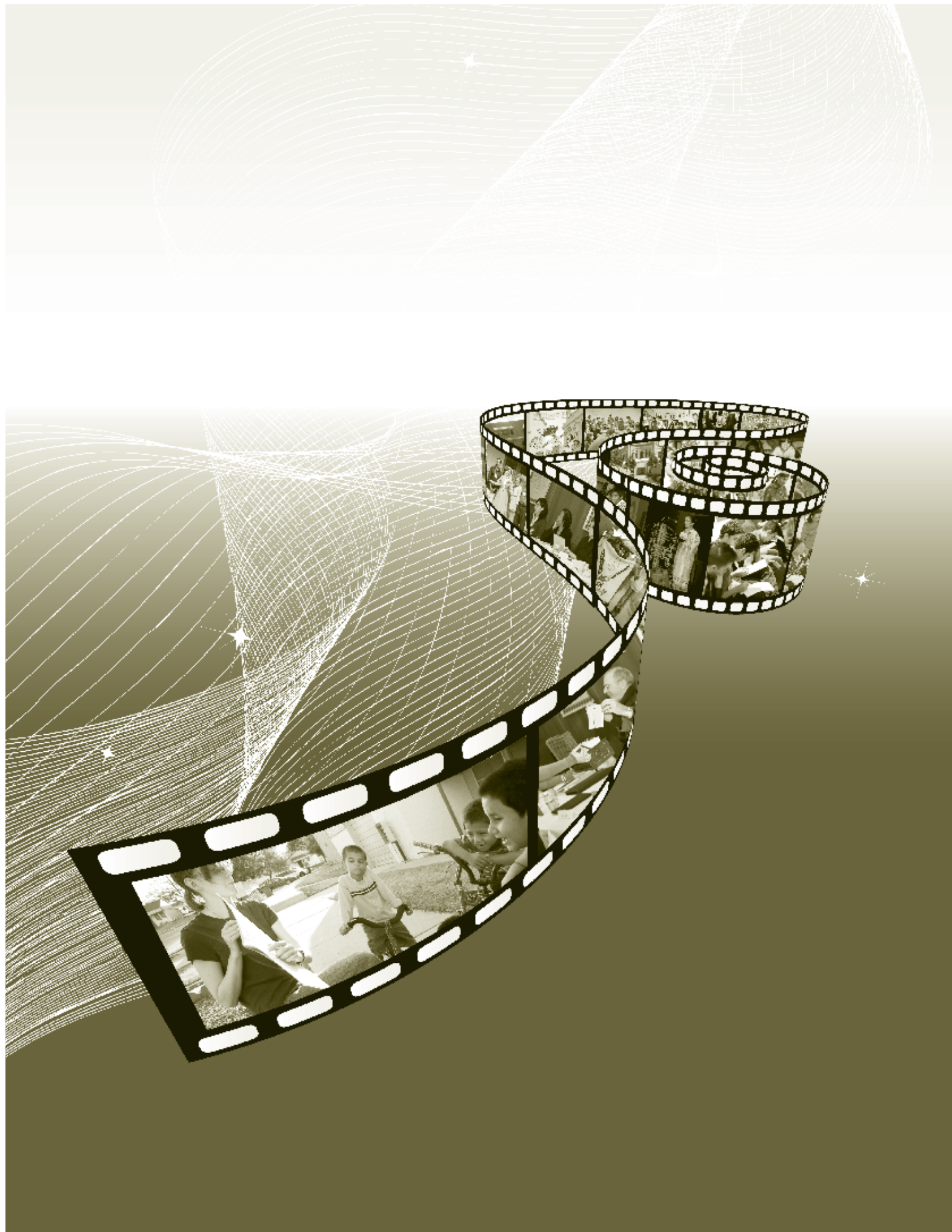
building our collective capacity as a community to uphold the review standards for accuracy and dignity across a wide diversity of fields. The Review Office fosters this learning process as it carries out its daily work and continues to encounter new questions, in consultation with authors, artists, reviewers, and the Review Task Force, and in accordance with the guidance of the National Assembly.

Systems and statistics

Nearly all submissions are received in electronic form, enhancing efficiency and allowing for electronic filing, archiving, and searching. The Review Office received approximately 185 submissions during 2010–11, continuing the pattern of small increases year to year. Roughly 80 percent of submissions are literature, 20 percent audiovisual materials. The wide variety of items reviewed includes articles, chapters, nonfiction books, novels, encyclopedia entries, songs, poems, deepening materials, DVDs, CDs, children's materials, study guides, scripts, pamphlets, sheet music, and PowerPoint presentations.

Authors and artists are generally asked to allow about 12 weeks for review of a book, eight weeks for an article, and four weeks for a CD. Many reviews are completed more quickly than this, though some require longer. The average time required for review of all submissions has gradually been decreasing. At any time, there are approximately 20 review cases pending, in addition to a steady stream of correspondence, inquiries, and resubmissions.

In the diversity, range, and depth of materials being created by Bahá'í authors and artists may be seen not only work that can contribute directly to the expansion, consolidation, and spiritual transformation of the Bahá'í community, but contributions to public discourse on issues of our day and efforts to inform new approaches to social action. It is a privilege to witness the creativity and devotion inspired by the message of Bahá'u'lláh, as expressed by the talented and dedicated individuals with which the Bahá'í community of the United States is blessed.





Conventions Office

The mandate for the Conventions Office, a part of the Secretariat, during 2010–11, the final year of the Five Year Plan, was to plan, coordinate, and direct the implementation of national and electoral unit conventions and to plan and coordinate any necessary boundary changes for electoral units.

Boundary changes approved in 2007 have been implemented, and the Conventions Office continues to offer support to Assemblies affected by the changes. The changes altered to some degree the majority of the 161 electoral units throughout the 48 contiguous states of the United States, particularly South Carolina, a state with a large number of electoral units that historically experienced low participation in Bahá'í elections.

Also completed within the first year of the current Five Year Plan was an extensive reorganization of electoral unit boundaries in California necessitated by the state's decision to eliminate judicial district boundaries.

With the assistance of the Membership and Records Office, the Conventions Office gave notification in writing to each community in the United States that was affected by these boundary changes. Each letter provided a brief explanation of the reason for the changes and included information on where individuals could search online to find the localities included in their redrawn electoral units. The Unit Convention website (<http://unitconvention.usbnc.org>) continues to be a helpful resource throughout the year for Local Assemblies and individuals needing information about the unit conventions in their area or to learn about the Bahá'í electoral process.

Since 2002, when the National Spiritual Assembly took the decision to relieve the Regional Bahá'í Councils of responsibility for coordinating unit conventions, the Conventions Office has taken on the task of coordinating all 161 unit convention elections. Regional Bahá'í Councils now provide the Conventions Office with guidance and recommendations regarding Local Spiritual Assemblies that would be suitable choices to serve as unit convention hosts.

In 2006, the National Assembly requested that a task force be coordinated by the Conventions Office to help to increase participation at unit conventions, held every October in all 161 electoral units. To this end, the task force implemented a number of exciting "firsts" including: creation of the first stand-alone Unit Convention website, where the friends can find valuable resources all year long pertaining to unit convention; production of three "viral videos," 30-second to one-minute video shorts about the nature and purpose of the unit convention; and the publishing of a special brochure sent to all adult believers in the United States, encouraging them to attend unit convention, to invite their Bahá'í friends, and to partake in the sacred nature of the electoral process. Lastly, as a follow-up to the unit conventions held in October 2006, the National Assembly requested

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In the years ahead, the Conventions Office hopes to make more multimedia options available, enabling delegates and all participants to experience Bahá'í National Convention on a multitude of levels.

The Conventions Office sent the first delegate mailing by email rather than by surface mail. Further, all delegate confirmation attendance forms were sent by email in 2011, which also provided savings to the Bahá'í National Fund.

that a summary of recommendations and suggestions from unit conventions be shared with the rest of the Bahá'í community. These summaries appeared in the March 2007 issue of *The American Bahá'í* and in the journal's online edition. The office hopes to maintain this special focus on the sacredness of the Bahá'í electoral process every year prior to unit convention and to reinforce the message throughout the remainder of the year.

In 2007, a secure online program for registration was made available to delegates to Bahá'í National Convention. This newly created program has the potential for many more uses, including the registration of agencies and committees. The Conventions Office continues to use the online registration form for delegates and, in conjunction with the Information Technology office, hopes to improve it each year.

In the years ahead, the Conventions Office hopes to make more multimedia options available, enabling delegates and all participants to experience Bahá'í National Convention on a multitude of levels.

The Conventions Office now sends many of its communications to Bahá'í National Convention delegates—as well as to electoral unit convention host Assemblies—by email. In 2011, the Conventions Office once again sent the first delegate mailing by email rather than by surface mail, as had been the practice in prior years. Further, all delegate confirmation attendance forms were sent by email in 2011, which also provided savings to the Bahá'í National Fund. As advances are made in keeping electronic communications secure, the office hopes to make further strides in minimizing the use of paper.

Bahá'í Center Assistance Corporation

Bahá'í Center Assistance (BCA) was created to support the growth and development of the Faith by providing a systematic program of education, training, and technical assistance to communities whose goal is to lease, purchase, and maintain Bahá'í Center properties. BCA is a financially self-supporting agency of the National Spiritual Assembly.

During 2010–11, BCA continued to emphasize the use of Bahá'í Centers to support efforts to meet the goals of the current and future Five Year Plans and to advance the process of entry by troops. It also carried on various programs started in previous years.

BCA pursued its objectives in the course of the year by:

- Holding four in-person Board meetings and seven telephone conference call meetings.
- Touring 12 Bahá'í facilities to increase its understanding of opportunities and challenges communities have encountered in acquiring and operating them and of strategies they have used to integrate their Centers as a resource for the advancement of local goals and goals of the Five Year Plan.
- Attending two Treasurer's Forums—one at Bosch Bahá'í School in California and the other at Green Acre Bahá'í School in Maine—making presentations on learning garnered from visits to Bahá'í Centers and the effects of decentralization on the use of Centers.
- Consulting with four communities, either in person or by telephone.
- Responding to inquiries from 10 communities.
- Providing sample documents—such as examples of mandates for Center committees, operations policies, employment/contractor issues, endowment funds, and rental/use policies—to communities requesting them.

During the year, BCA completed the following projects:

- Summarized and reported on the effects on Bahá'í Centers of the decentralization of core activities.
- Created a database of all Bahá'í Centers in the continental United States.
- Developed a Start Up/Temporary Bahá'í Facility Kit.

For more information on the Bahá'í Center Assistance Corporation, please visit BCA's website (www.bahaicenterassistance.org). BCA can also be contacted via email (info@bahaicenterassistance.org), telephone (847-425-7940), fax (847-425-7941), or surface mail (Bahá'í Center Assistance, 1233 Central St., Evanston IL 60201-1611).

Board members toured 12 Bahá'í facilities to increase understanding of opportunities, challenges, and strategies communities have used to integrate their Centers as a resource for the advancement of local goals and goals of the Five Year Plan.

Six new titles in Braille and two new books in Large Print were produced during the year. In addition, six new titles were added to the Service's list of audio recordings. The Service makes a lending library of all these materials available to Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís alike.

Bahá'í Service for the Blind

The Bahá'í Service for the Blind continued during 2010–11 to fulfill its primary responsibility to provide the literature of the Faith in various media to those who are unable to use normal print due to a disability. The three media currently available are Braille, audio recordings, and Large Print.

Six new titles in Braille and two new books in Large Print were produced during the year. In addition, six new titles were added to the Service's list of audio recordings. The Service makes a lending library of all these materials available to Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís alike. It also ensures that *The American Bahá'í* is regularly available on cassette tape, free of charge.

The Service's main focus of activity this past year has been on audio material. Digital recording is now the standard for audio recordings by the Library of Congress. As the Service has generally conformed to the practices of the Library of Congress, it this year began digitally recording audio books. The recordings are then produced in the DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System) book format—a format designed especially for the blind and physically handicapped, used throughout the world. The books can also be made available for the flash cartridges used by the Library of Congress. Whenever possible, the Service will rely on its audio recordings and aims to gradually convert these into digital recordings. Due to their poor quality, however, many of the original tape recordings will have to be re-recorded in digital format.

As in the past, all work for the Service is done by volunteers. The Service's website (www.BahaiServiceForTheBlind.org) provides information about its work and an up-to-date listing of all its materials.

Human Resources

During the year 2010–11, the Office of Human Resources (HR) processed more than 337 applications for service at the Bahá'í National Center, at the three permanent Bahá'í schools, at the satellite offices of the National Center in New York City and Washington, D.C., and elsewhere. Of these, 56 led to new hires.

As is the case with all new hires, quarterly orientations were arranged for these new staff members, at which the Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly welcomed them and addressed their questions. All final documents required for bringing new staff on board are handled by the National Center's Recruiter.

During this period, 10 recruiting trips were made to Bahá'í communities in the Midwest and Southwest. Supplementing the volunteers already serving at the Bahá'í House of Worship, a number of volunteers were recruited to serve in various other national offices, such as the Persian-American Affairs Office and the Media Services department.

The National Center's Benefits Administrator serves the needs of the staff in relation to their health, life, disability and pension benefits. This requires updating the Pensions booklet, tracking potential recipients of the Defined Benefits Plan, and arranging several yearly meetings to discuss the pension plans with the carrier, Principal Financial Group, in an effort to keep the staff informed of current developments and to answer their questions regarding their pension plans. The Benefits Administrator ensures that staff are entered into our payroll system and removed in a timely fashion. The Administrator has taken college-level courses to develop enhanced skills in the processing of the benefits program.

The HR administrative assistant coordinates the day-to-day administrative functions of the office and is responsible for scheduling all travel and lodging arrangements for applicants who interview for positions at the National Center, at the permanent schools and institutes, and elsewhere. Coverage of the National Center's reception/switchboard desk in the absence of the regular staff person is another of the assistant's responsibilities, as is scheduling the staffing of all projects requiring volunteers. During 2010–11, together with the Director of Human Resources, the HR administrative assistant arranged for a very successful free flu shot drive. The art and development work for all recruiting flyers for both the Bahá'í World Center and the National Center are done by this staff person. Thousands of emails and telephone inquiries are addressed by the HR staff each year.

The Director of Human Resources is responsible for the general functioning of the Office of Human Resources, which involves ensuring that the National Center remains in compliance with federal, state, and local government regulations and the policies and procedures set by the National Spiritual Assembly. Mailroom services and the Reception/Switchboard Desk fall under the supervision of the Human Resources Director. In addition, the Director assists with the recruiting of staff for

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the Bahá'í World Center. Postings of these positions are regularly sent out to Local Spiritual Assemblies, registered Bahá'í groups, and, in some instances, all United States believers with email addresses in the National Spiritual Assembly's membership database.

This year, at the Bahá'í National Center's annual Ayyám-i-Há gathering for staff, charitable contributions were collected for two local organizations, the New Trier Township Food Pantry and the Evanston YWCA Women's Shelter. The staff responded in a most generous manner.

Information Technology

The Office of Information Technology (IT) provides email, file and print services, local and long-distance telephone services, help desk support, reporting services, and a number of enterprise applications for the offices and agencies of the National Spiritual Assembly (UnityWeb, eBudget, Cluster Assignment Tool, RTI Tracker, Seeker Response, and support for SRP—the Statistical Report Program), for Local Spiritual Assemblies and registered Bahá'í groups (eMembership), and for the individual believer or seeker (Online Registration and My Page Personal Online Services).

During 2010–11, IT completed the following projects:

- Enhanced eMembership for Local Spiritual Assemblies and registered Bahá'í groups to enable them to register the children of non-Bahá'í parents and, subsequently, for Assemblies to process the enrollment of these non-Bahá'í parents.
- Enhanced Online Registration to permit parents who are declaring their belief in Bahá'u'lláh online to also register their children at the same time.
- Enhanced the My Personal Information page to allow Bahá'í parents to register their children online.
- Enhanced the departmental eBudget application to support multiple years.
- Added the Online Contribution System to My Page and provided authentication services for the application.
- Upgraded our SQL Databases to SQL 2005.
- Established the Office of Document Management and began implementation of the OnBase Document Management system.
- Replaced the credit card processing application in all four bookstores to meet payment card industry compliance regulations.
- Enhanced Internet services at all three permanent Bahá'í schools and at the Office of External Affairs to relieve network traffic and improve overall performance.

The following projects are under way:

- Virtualizing servers to reduce the number of physical servers requiring support.
- Investigating alternative voice-over-IP telephone services as an alternative to our current ShoreTel system.
- Investigating the Windows 7 operating system (to replace Windows XP) for compatibility issues with our legacy applications in preparation for upcoming computer replacements.

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Over the past year, approximately 47 percent of all enrollments and child registrations were processed by Assemblies and registered groups using eMembership, 33 percent were processed by the Membership Office, and 20 percent were entered online by individual believers through Online Registration and My Page.

- Extending wireless Internet service to the guest quarters at all three permanent Bahá'í schools.
- Moving to a new Internet provider for service to the Bahá'í National Center and new MPLS services to our external sites.
- Implementing new backup services to an off-site location as part our Disaster Recovery plan.
- Adding “area management” functionality to UnityWeb to manage various geographical constructs: Auxiliary Board member jurisdictions, Electoral Units, and clusters.

Membership and Records, also part of the IT organization, maintains the national membership database—processing enrollments and child registrations, international transfers, address changes, and Local Spiritual Assembly and registered group elections—and responds to email and phone requests from among the 1,100 Assemblies and 1,700 registered groups. In addition, the office maintains archival records for individuals and institutions.

As the adoption of online tools such as eMembership, Online Registration, and My Page steadily increases, the percentage of enrollments and child registrations being processed by the Membership Office is decreasing. Over the past year, approximately 47 percent of all enrollments and child registrations were processed by Assemblies and registered groups using eMembership, 33 percent were processed by the Membership Office, and 20 percent were entered online by individual believers through Online Registration and My Page. Over 44,000 changes in addresses and other contact information were recorded in the past year, with 58 percent of these performed by the Membership Office, primarily as a result of returned and forwarded mail. Approximately 2,000 international transfers, which involve transferring an individual's membership from one National Spiritual Assembly to another, are processed each year.

In the coming year, major projects will include implementation of the document management system, workstation replacements, upgrades to email and office suite software, and full implementation of the backup and disaster recovery plans.

Meetings And Hospitality

The Meetings and Hospitality Office provides on-site and off-site meeting planning services for the National Spiritual Assembly and its offices and agencies, attending to meals and the provision of hospitality for all regular and special meetings of the National Spiritual Assembly, special programs at the Bahá'í House of Worship, meetings at the Bahá'í National Center with members of the Continental Board of Counselors, Auxiliary Board members, the Regional Bahá'í Councils, and other special guests—including those participating in the Special Visitors' program. The office also assists with arrangements for Bahá'í National Convention. In all these efforts, the office strives to provide high-quality, loving, and caring support while managing in an efficient and cost-effective manner to protect the interests of the National Fund.

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The office continues to work on a properties master plan in an effort to assist the National Spiritual Assembly in making significant properties decisions. As part of this effort, detailed facilities inspections and historical research were completed on all National Spiritual Assembly facilities during 2010–11.

Properties Office

The Properties Office consists of several departments with many varied responsibilities. At the Bahá'í National Center, the office maintains oversight of custodial, maintenance, Public Safety, and Temple Restoration services. In addition, the office is responsible for all capital improvement projects at all National Spiritual Assembly properties in the continental United States. The Properties Office also works closely with the facility coordinators and maintenance staff at the permanent Bahá'í schools and training institutes in support of their routine and preventive maintenance duties. Lastly, the office ensures that the historic properties under the control of the National Spiritual Assembly are maintained to the highest standards. Over \$1 million in capital projects are managed annually from the Properties Office. At this writing, the office continues to work on a properties master plan in an effort to assist the National Spiritual Assembly in making significant properties decisions. As part of this effort, detailed facilities inspections and historical research were completed on all National Spiritual Assembly facilities during 2010–11.

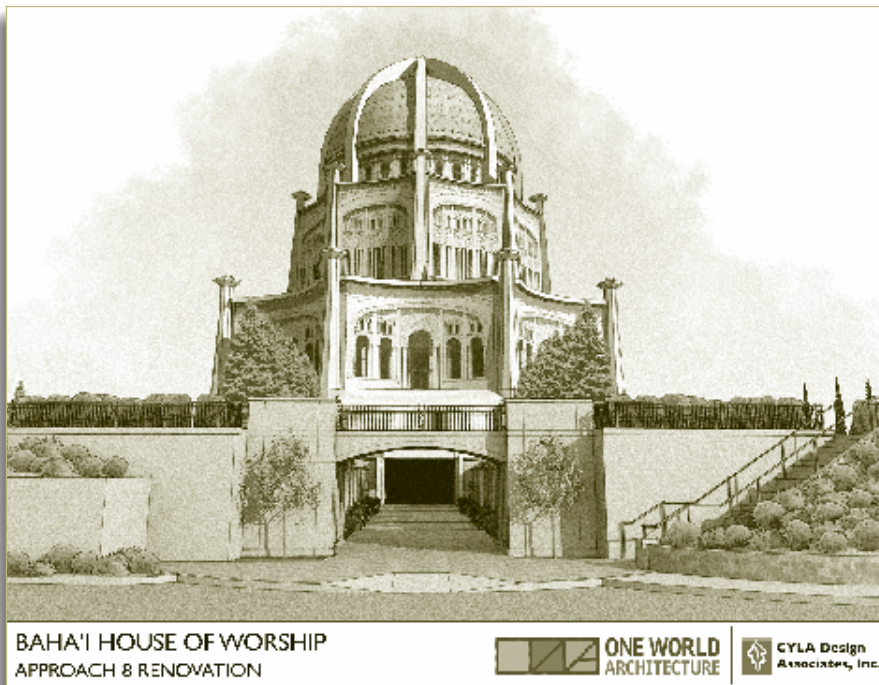
Bahá'í National Center

The Bahá'í National Center consists of the Bahá'í House of Worship, Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds, Amelia Collins House, Central Office Building (1233 Central), Bahá'í Home, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, and Temple Concrete Studio. These facilities consist of approximately 100,000 square feet of occupied space and are served by an 11-person crew responsible for all custodial duties, maintenance and repairs, small to medium remodeling projects, snow removal, vehicle maintenance, and other duties and responsibilities.

Public Safety

The Public Safety Department is staffed by 10 full-time public safety officers. The officers are responsible for the safety and security of all properties and staff members at the Bahá'í National Center. The Public Safety Department is a uniformed service providing 24-hour, seven-days-a-week service. Officers' duties include vehicle and foot patrols of all properties, several times a day. Their friendly and courteous interaction with visitors ensures that all guests appreciate the standards of behavior that are necessary to maintain the serene spiritual atmosphere that pervades the Bahá'í House of Worship auditorium and gardens. The Public Safety Department is assisted in its security efforts by a state-of-the-art security system. The department also provides special transportation services and assists maintenance staff with snow removal when necessary.





Temple restoration

Restoration of the Bahá'í House of Worship and its gardens is moving ahead rapidly. Six of the nine gardens and fountains are complete and the remaining three are scheduled for completion by winter 2011. Replacement of all steps and terraces is also complete. Construction of the new service entrance will begin in summer 2011 and will be complete by March 2012. The entire restoration project will be complete by April 2012 in time for celebrations of the centenary of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to North America.

Much of the infrastructure work for the new Visitors' Center has been completed, with construction of the building itself scheduled to begin in June 2012. Most of the House of Worship utilities have been extended under the gardens to the new Visitors' Center site and a storm water retention cistern has been installed under the gardens for irrigation and water conservation.

Bahá'í schools and institutes

The construction of new staff housing units and a new guest housing dormitory at Green Acre Bahá'í School is complete. Summer 2011 will see the completion of the three cottages that will be used for administration, library, and youth services. Over \$150,000 in major storm damage repairs were completed at the Wilhelm Property in Teaneck, New Jersey, as well as a remodeling of the kitchen and bathrooms. Significant road repairs and overlay projects were completed at the Native American Bahá'í Institute and at Bosch Bahá'í School.

Goals for the year ahead include completion of the properties master plan, significant improvements to the water supply system at Bosch Bahá'í School, and numerous painting, roofing, and other maintenance projects around the country.

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Since its inception, the office has been a substantial contributor to development of the Bahá'í National Fund's online contribution system and the forthcoming new national website.

Office of Web Development

The Office of Web Development was established in October 2010 to serve the National Spiritual Assembly by creating and supporting an Internet presence of the highest quality for the Bahá'í Faith in the United States.

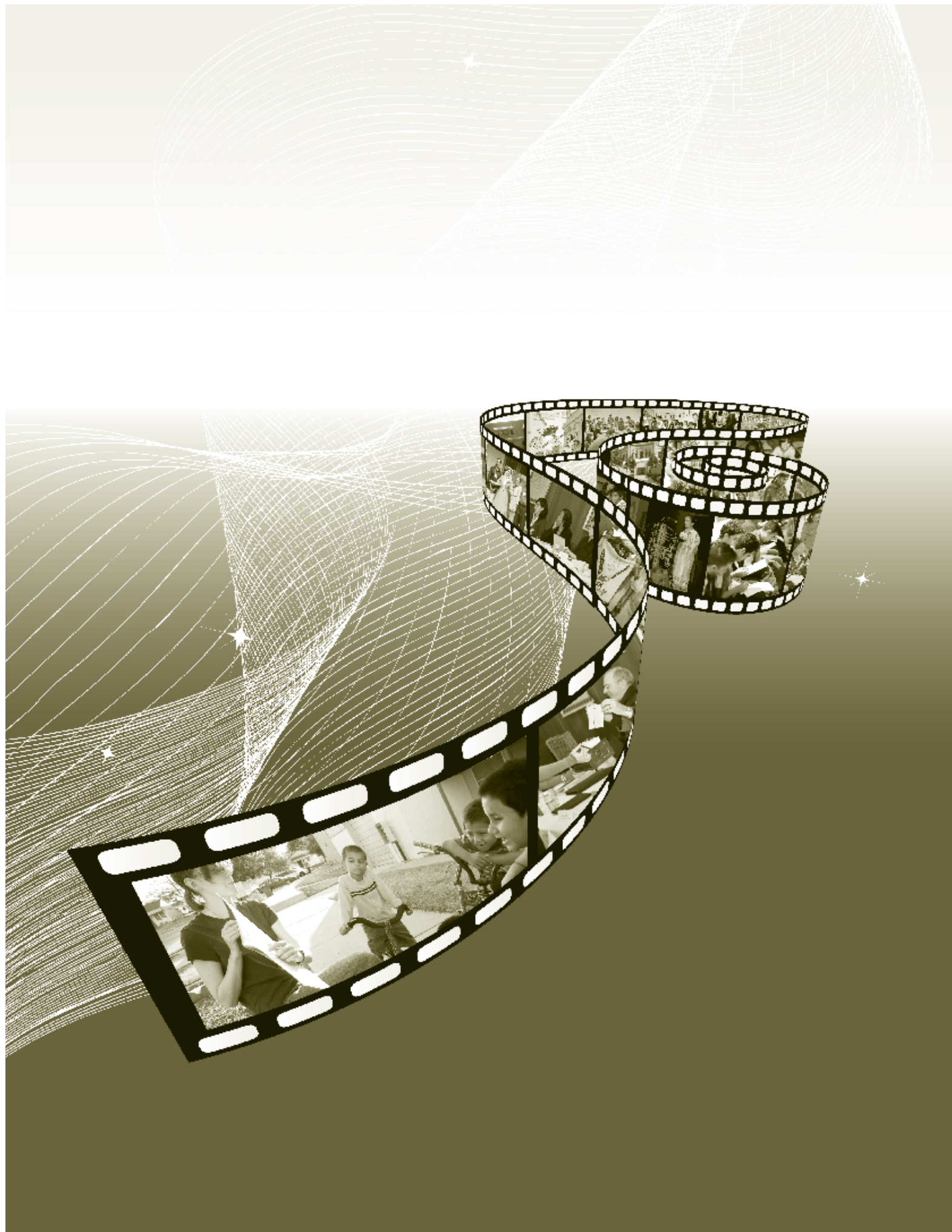
Since its inception, the office has been a substantial contributor to development of the Bahá'í National Fund's online contribution system (accessible through <http://mybahaifund.us>) and the forthcoming new national website (on the Bahai.us domain).

The Office of Web Development hosts three key applications:

- **THE BAHAI.US WEB PORTAL**, a single destination allowing all U.S. Bahá'ís to access public communications and administrative and other materials provided by the National Spiritual Assembly and its offices and agencies. A single-sign-on system provides varied role-based levels of access.
- **THE NATIONALGEODATA PROJECT**, a Web-based interface for regional-, cluster-, and local-level users that generates custom maps clarifying cluster and other boundaries, based on user and locality data kept at the Bahá'í National Center.
- **DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT SUITE**, a portfolio of services on Bahai.us designed to provide a robust toolkit for discourse, analytical reporting, and community organization that utilizes several popular third-party Web services and applications.

Day-to-day operations include:

- Technical facilitation and oversight for official Bahai.us Web properties.
- Creating and managing Web properties for the Bahá'í National Center.
- Providing Web services to facilitate and support Web properties of regions, clusters, and localities.
- Acting as central component of the Bahá'í Web Developer Network (www.bahaiwebdev.net).





Association for Bahá'í Studies—North America

The Association for Bahá'í Studies—North America (ABS) is a membership organization serving Alaska, Canada, and the United States. Its Executive Committee, currently with members from Canada and the United States, is appointed by and operates under the jurisdiction of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada. The ABS office in Ottawa, Ontario, is staffed by two full-time employees. The Association currently has 1,850 individual members and 50 institutional members worldwide. Eighteen affiliated associations function under the jurisdiction of their respective National Assemblies.

The Association's mission is "to stimulate scholarly study of the Faith and its teachings, to promote a sound understanding of the Cause in academic circles, and to demonstrate its relevance to the study of social issues," as well as "to stimulate an appetite for learning within the Bahá'í community generally." This mission is pursued within the context of the overarching global plans of the Universal House of Justice for the expansion and development of the Bahá'í community.

To advance its mission, the Association is focusing on the following lines of action:

- Developing capacity for Bahá'í scholarship among students and young adults.
- Creating opportunities for publication and circulation of diverse forms of Bahá'í scholarship, including, but not limited to, *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies*.
- Encouraging university courses across disciplines on diverse aspects of the Bahá'í Faith.
- Providing a series of venues for the continuing development of Bahá'í scholarship and engagement of leaders of thought—from grassroots initiatives by Area Committees and Special Interest Groups, to sessions at Bahá'í schools, to symposia and seminars, to the annual North American ABS annual conference.

Highlights of ABS development during the year 2010–11 include:

ABS Annual Conference

"Rethinking Human Nature"—a core purpose of religion and a key focus of 25 years of statements from the Universal House of Justice and the Bahá'í International Community—was the theme of the 34th ABS Annual Conference, held August 12–15 at the Hyatt Regency Vancouver. Prevailing assumptions about human nature are being seriously questioned at the margins of many fields of study, and Bahá'ís have a great deal to contribute to this emerging discourse. The response was enthusiastic: the conference attendance of almost 1,800 was the largest number since 1986.

Building on the success of sessions from a year earlier, three of the six plenary sessions were organized as panels, allowing for more speakers on more finely

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146 ...Bahá'í International Radio Service

148 ...Brighton Creek Conference Center

150 ...Health for Humanity

Prevailing assumptions about human nature are being seriously questioned at the margins of many fields of study, and Bahá'ís have a great deal to contribute to this emerging discourse. The response to the theme "Rethinking Human Nature" was enthusiastic: the conference attendance of almost 1,800 was the largest number since 1986.

A special session was held at Louhelen Bahá'í School in Davison, Michigan, in October 2010, on "Engaging in the Discourse on Race: A Conversation."



focused topics, such as the Aboriginal–non-Aboriginal reconciliation process and multidisciplinary views of human nature. An arts task force developed a more integrated arts program. Break-out sessions included highly successful Persian-language sessions, a follow-up session for the theme panel, and several non-traditional format sessions, such as discussion of and participation in a play in progress, an interview with a long-time artist, and a highly personal ethnographic exploration of law and personal transformation. Mr. Hooper Dunbar opened the conference with a talk on humankind's dual nature and the nature of transformation. The 28th Hasan M. Balyuzi Memorial Lecture was presented by physician, author, poet, and translator Dr. Julio

Savi. Information about purchasing audio CDs of plenary sessions, as well as plans for future conferences (August 2011 in San Francisco, California, and August 2012 in Montreal, Québec) can be found on the Association website (www.bahai-studies.ca).

STUDENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS. The session for university faculty and students organized at the conference offered a forum in which to learn and consult about aspects of Bahá'í scholarship and service most relevant to their concerns, as well as an opportunity to devise strategies for possible implementation on campuses. Interactive workshops were dedicated to learning about the relationship between scholarship and the Covenant, the nature of learning, and the place of scholarship in the processes of growth and core activities. Later, participants worked in small groups to devise strategies to enhance the role of campus groups and help them become forums to begin learning about "participation in the prevalent discourses of society."

Louhelen session

A special session was held at Louhelen Bahá'í School in Davison, Michigan, in October 2010, on "Engaging in the Discourse on Race: A Conversation." Approximately 60 people gathered at the event, which was co-sponsored by ABS and the U.S. National Spiritual Assembly's Office of Communications. The primary purpose was for participants to learn from each other's experience about how to bring Bahá'í perspectives to bear in contemporary race discourse, aware that this involves a process of fundamental transformation for everyone concerned. A secondary purpose was to experiment with a session on building capacity for discourse, in order to inform further collaboration between ABS and the permanent Bahá'í schools in the U.S. Further information about the event is available on the ABS website.

The Journal of Bahá'í Studies

One issue of the *Journal* was published (Volume 19, Number 1–4), including articles by Otto Donald Rogers (2009 Balyuzi lecture, “The Artist and the Grammarian”), Holly Hanson (“Enacting Thought: Divine Will, Human Agency, and the Possibility of Justice”), Michael Karlberg and Todd Smith (“Articulating a Consultative Epistemology: Toward a Reconciliation of Truth and Relativism”), and a review by Kenneth E. Bowers of *Revelation and Social Reality: Learning to Translate What Is Written into Reality* by Paul Lample, member of the Universal House of Justice. Older *Journal* articles continue to be posted on the Web as they are converted to electronic format.

Webinars

The Association initiated regular webinars in March 2011, arranging for speakers to engage with ABS members by giving a presentation, followed by time for questions and answers. The goal is to continue these monthly webinars, as well as to post conference presentations on the ABS website.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

The SIGs are in the process of developing their websites, accessible from the ABS site, with the support of the ABS Office. In addition to contributing to annual conference sessions, some SIGs are strengthening their capacity to create networking opportunities among members to support each other in their Bahá'í scholarship activities throughout the year.

University courses

The Executive Committee created a working document, “Teaching Courses with Bahá'í Content in Universities and Other Institutions of Higher Learning: Opportunities and Issues to Consider,” based on previous reflection by friends engaged in this service. Further review and reflection took place at the 2010 annual conference.

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During the 20th Annual Conference of the Association of Friends of Persian Culture, diverse aspects of Persian culture were discussed—with particular emphasis on how they relate to the Bahá'í Faith.

Association of Friends of Persian Culture

Background

In 1991, the Persian-American Affairs Office received permission from the National Spiritual Assembly to establish an organization devoted to the promotion of Persian arts and culture. Later, the name of the organization was changed to the Association of Friends of Persian Culture. The Association is a nonprofit organization operating under the auspices of the National Spiritual Assembly.

Objectives

The main objectives of the Association are to:

- Assist individuals of Iranian descent to remain in contact with and gain a deeper understanding of the cultural, artistic, and literary heritage of Iran.
- Encourage children, youth, and young adults of Iranian descent living abroad to familiarize themselves with and gain a deeper appreciation of Persian arts, literature, and culture.
- Involve ever-increasing numbers of friends of the Faith, particularly Iranian scholars and artists, in the Association's activities.
- Help English-speaking relatives and friends of Iranians as well as the general public gain an appreciation of Persian culture.
- Promote systematic and comprehensive study of Persian arts and culture.

Activities

ANNUAL CONFERENCE. The Association organized and conducted its 20th Annual Conference during Labor Day weekend 2010, in the Chicago suburb of Schaumburg, Illinois. The conference program included a message from the National Spiritual Assembly, presented by its Secretary, Mr. Kenneth E. Bowers, and its Deputy Secretary, Ms. S. Valerie Dana, conveying the greetings of the Assembly and its enthusiastic support of these conferences. For the benefit of the friends of the Faith present in the audience, the message included a bold assertion of the fundamental verities of the Faith. During the conference, diverse aspects of Persian culture were discussed—with particular emphasis on how they relate to the Bahá'í Faith. Artistic programs were presented, and participants were informed of the results and conclusions of recent studies about Persian culture. This year's conference saw the highest number of participants (2,476 adults, 274 college students, and 332 youths, junior youths, and children), the majority of whom were of Persian origin. Although most attendees were from North America, many from across Europe, Australia, Asia, and Central and South America were also in attendance.

The Association's Board of Directors was assisted in conducting the conference

by Task Forces for Arts, Children-Junior Youth, Youth, and Young Professionals Networking programs. The conference included sessions in Persian with simultaneous translation enjoyed by the English-speaking attendees via headphones. Sessions were also held for young professionals, youth, and junior youth, and classes were held for children ages 3–5, 6–8, and 9–10. Workshops on poetry recitation and family issues related to junior youth were offered. Present at the conference were former Universal House of Justice member Mr. Hushmand Fatheazam and Dr. Ehsan Yarshater, author of *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

A special feature of the conference was recognition of Dr. Amin Banani for his academic contributions to Persian culture and literature. In addition, Mrs. Shokouh Rezaie and Mr. Manouchehr Vahman were recognized for their many years of outstanding contributions to the artistic facets of the Association's conferences.

Nine well-known friends of the Faith accepted the invitation of the Association and addressed the audience, and many more made artistic presentations. These included an Iranian member of the Canadian Parliament and three prominent personalities in the Persian-language media, known across the globe. The number of Iranian friends of the Faith in attendance was larger than at any of the Association's past conferences.

All three media personalities in attendance subsequently presented reports of the conference in their television programs, praising the high quality of the conference and expressing support for the persecuted Bahá'ís of Iran.

Plans for the 21st conference are well under way. Many prominent guests have accepted the invitation of the Board of Directors to speak or make artistic presentations in what promises to be another successful annual conference.

PUBLICATIONS. Efforts at publishing the proceedings of the conferences and other pertinent materials continue. A concerted effort is being made to publish monographs of the significant presentations made at the Association's conferences. Six titles are available and more will be published shortly. In addition, CDs and DVDs of talks and music by performing artists are available for purchase. More materials will be produced as this process gathers momentum.

WEBSITE. Efforts to improve the Association's website, which was launched in 2008, continue. Features of the website include information about the Association and its activities, online registration for the annual conferences, and access to conference presentations and other materials.

Finances

Consistent with its status as a nonprofit corporation, the Association has operated completely independent of the National Bahá'í Fund for the past four years. Sources of income include registration fees and other income from the annual conferences, sales of materials, and contributions from individuals.

Nine well-known friends of the Faith accepted the invitation of the Association and addressed the audience, and many more made artistic presentations. These included an Iranian member of the Canadian Parliament and three prominent personalities in the Persian-language media, known across the globe.

While the Association originated as a network of mental health professionals, it became clear over time that its concerns with authentic human development were also appealing to a broader audience of people concerned with authentic human development.

Authenticity Institute

In 2010, the Bahá'í Association for Mental Health (BAMH) held its 11th annual conference at Bosch Bahá'í School in Santa Cruz, California, focused on the theme: "Reflections on Heaven and Earth: The Role of Spirituality in Authentic Community Building." The conference featured presentations by several distinguished speakers and prompted useful reflections on spirituality, authenticity, and the current social environment in which these issues seek attention. In consequence, the organization's 2010–11 Board carefully reexamined its mission and, believing that it was broader than its name implied, made the decision to rename the organization the Authenticity Institute (TAI) and recast its mission.

While the Association originated as a network of mental health professionals, it became clear over time that its concerns with authentic human development were appealing not only to people in the field of mental health, but also to a broader audience of people concerned with authentic human development—that is, human development that addresses the dimensions of authentic human connection, the healing power of authentic relationships, spirituality, and social cohesion. The Board instituted a plan for reaching out to this larger population, comprising not only members of the Bahá'í community, but also the larger community that shares these concerns. It decided to draw upon some of the possibilities in the new technologies of social networking to serve as an umbrella organization for these populations:

- Mental health professionals.
- Diversity trainers and organizational development specialists.
- Academics and scholars interested in spirituality, mental health, and new models of human development.
- Families and communities affected by the challenges of mental illness and a failure of social cohesion.

The Authenticity Institute continues to be a nonprofit, Bahá'í-inspired organization, incorporated in the State of Illinois as a nonprofit corporation. The National Spiritual Assembly serves as its "sole member," with the Board of Directors serving at its appointment. It maintains a committed membership as well as a database of some 500 individuals with an interest in its programs.

Utilizing a newly configured website, a blog, and a Facebook page, and building upon its history in offering an annual conference, continuing education programs for licensed professionals, and regional networking events, the Authenticity Institute (TAI) will address this newly articulated mission:

The Authenticity Institute proposes that an authentic life is one in which we experience the full development of our inherent capacities and foster that same development in others. It argues that inauthentic, manipulative, and power-seek-

ing relationships are fostered by a consumer culture and contribute significantly to mental illness and the destruction of social ties.

It is the mission of the Authenticity Institute to assist individuals, groups and institutions to:

- Achieve an evolving understanding of human capacity.
- Appreciate the growth-producing powers of a true and evolving awareness of the intrinsic value of human life.
- Acquire deeper insights into the causes of interpersonal and inter-group inefficiency and conflict and the means to create greater productivity and unity.
- Acquire skills that enable creative and effective responses. Respond creatively and effectively to the challenges of power struggles and scarcity-centered behavior.
- Acquire the wherewithal to create cultures of cooperation and encouragement that embrace all humankind.

The Authenticity Institute (TAI) will continue to build upon its history:

- Practicing an outward-looking orientation through the participation of non-Bahá'í presenters and attendees at its annual conference and seminars—such as Dr. Ofer Zur, who presented an ethics seminar at Bosch Bahá'í School in September 2010, attracting a regional population of mental health professionals. In September 2011, Ms. Courtney Armstrong will present training on Rapid Trauma Resolution at an annual seminar at Green Acre Bahá'í School.
- Nominating and electing new members of the TAI Board at the annual meeting.
- Convening an annual retreat for Board development and organizational planning in Chattanooga, Tennessee.
- Maintaining the TAI website (www.authenticity-institute.org) with conference reports, abstracts of presentations, presentation papers, a statement of purpose, and various other useful documents.
- Auditing the TAI financial documents.
- Planning and promoting the upcoming conference on the theme “Practical Spirituality,” to be held at Green Acre Bahá'í School, September 23–25, 2011.
- Securing continuing education units for participants in the professional seminar and promoting it to regional health professionals.
- Continuing promotion of the booklet “Some Guidance for Spiritual Assemblies Regarding Mental Illness and Its Treatment” through the TAI website.

Several new initiatives were also begun during 2010–11:

- Outreach to a population of race unity workers and consultation with that population regarding collaborative efforts.
- Intensification of collaboration between TAI and the Bahá'í Network on AIDS, Sexuality, Addictions, and Abuse (BNASAA), exploring local events focused on practical spirituality in addressing such concerns as addiction, integration of refugee populations, parenting in matters of sexuality, and support for marriages and families.

The Authenticity Institute proposes that an authentic life is one in which we experience the full development of our inherent capacities and foster that same development in others.

Programs are created to remove misconceptions about the Faith in Iran, its birthplace, and to support the efforts of the friends in Iran by encouraging the engagement of Iranian Bahá'ís with others in initiatives that serve the common good.

Bahá'í International Radio Service

Historical overview

Payam-e-Doost Radio, *Á'in-i-Bahá'í*, and *Noveen TV* operate under the management of the Bahá'í International Radio Service (BIRS), an agency affiliated with the National Spiritual Assembly.

Payam-e-Doost Radio, in Persian, started as a weekly AM radio program in the Washington, D.C., area on March 21, 1994 and commenced broadcasting world-wide on April 21, 2001. Daily 45-minute programs have been broadcast on short-wave radio to Iran and the Middle East and on two satellite systems to the Middle East, the Americas, and Europe. They are also offered through GLWIZ, a popular Web-based application that gives subscribers access to Persian channels through their television sets and computers. *Payam-e-Doost Radio* can also be accessed on the Internet (www.bahairadio.org) and on Facebook.

Weekly Bahá'í television programs in Persian, under the titles *Á'in-i-Bahá'í* and *Noveen TV*, are broadcast via the AFN, Pars, and Andisheh channels, which are viewable in Iran. Both programs may also be viewed on the Internet (at www.bahaiview.org and www.noveentv.org) and on GLWIZ, YouTube, and Facebook. *Á'in-i-Bahá'í* initiated its programs in July 2005 while *Noveen TV*, catering to a younger audience, was first broadcast in May 2009.

Programming goals

Programs are created to remove misconceptions about the Faith in Iran, its birthplace, and to support the efforts of the friends in Iran by encouraging the engagement of Iranian Bahá'ís with others in initiatives that serve the common good.

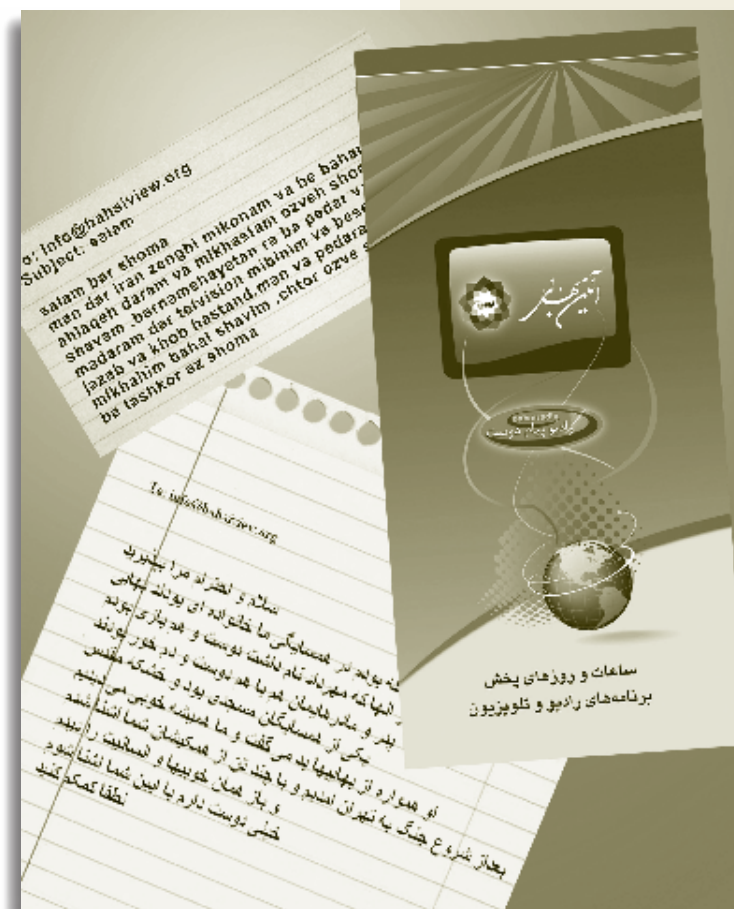
Major achievements

Among accomplishments during the year 2010–11:

- More diverse programming in both radio and TV, addressing current social and economic issues in today's Iran and involving Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í scholars, at times in the form of a panel. New shows were also created for radio and TV designed to be appealing to Iran's youth.
- Radio and TV interviews/roundtables were conducted with the friends of the Faith on topics such as human rights in Iran, prosperity of Iranians and their culture, and building the Iran of the future—with the collaboration of many friends from around the world. The effort was in consonance with BIRS's objective to create alliances with like-minded Iranian organizations and individuals.
- Efficient handling of an increase in inquiries received from all over the world—especially from Iranian non-Bahá'ís—as a result of the broadcasting of daily radio programs and two weekly TV programs. The inquiries are followed up with more information about the Faith, through various forms of Bahá'í literature,

phone calls, and emails.

- Collaboration with a number of task forces, which has increased the production of various segments for both *Payam-e-Doost Radio* programs and *Á'in-i-Bahá'í/Noveen TV* television programs.
- *Á'in-i-Bahá'í TV* joining *Noveen TV* and *Payam-e Doost Radio* on Facebook and YouTube.
- Addition of an RSS feed to the three websites.
- Appointment—by the National Spiritual Assembly—of a group of individuals to lend their insight and expertise as members of a Fund Development Task Force for the advancement of this agency. With the help of this task force, a custom-made contribution card was designed and at three annual conferences (Friends of Persian Culture Conference, Grand Canyon Bahá'í Conference, and Divine Art of Living Conference) successful presentations were made to the participants to:
 - Raise awareness about the agency's activities.
 - Share reactions from around the world to the programs.
 - Encourage regular financial support.
- Creation of a database of friends of BIRS and establishment of procedures to increase this circle of friends through occasional email communication.
- Publication of informative articles in *Payam-e Bahá'í* and *The American Bahá'í* magazines.
- Furnishing of TV programs to the Bahá'í community in New Zealand for broadcasting. Radio programs are being used as part of other Persian-language Bahá'í media around the world.
- Increase in the versatility of the TV programs through use of local public studios to record new programs.
- Benefiting from the services of a number of volunteers and interns during the year.



The year's accomplishments included more diverse programming in both radio and TV, addressing current social and economic issues in today's Iran and involving Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í scholars, at times in the form of a panel.

Honoring the site's deep Native American heritage, one of the three main objectives for BCCC is to better serve the Native American community. The others are to support significantly expanded youth and junior youth activities, and to support Bahá'í cluster activity and the institute process.

Brighton Creek Conference Center

In 2009 the National Spiritual Assembly acquired a remarkable resource in support of communities in the Northwest: the Brighton Creek Conference Center (BCCC) in McKenna, Washington. This forested 24-acre retreat center, open for Bahá'í and public use, was under the stewardship of Local Spiritual Assemblies or in private operation by Bahá'ís for decades. Countless individuals, groups, and communities, Bahá'í and other, from across the United States have utilized Brighton Creek for a variety of teaching, training, consultation, art, and social events.

BCCC's Board of Directors is appointed by the National Spiritual Assembly to safeguard the property and fulfill its mission of serving as "a regional center for the spiritual, educational and cultural advancement of humanity."

Operating as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, the Center is wholly supported by program and rental fees and the generous contributions of Bahá'ís in five Northwestern states. Dedicated funds are available for facility expansion and upgrades, but the Center does not receive any operating money from the National Bahá'í Fund.

Facilities include 16 simple cabins, large meeting and communal dining halls, and a bookshop on rural, wooded grounds that include a creek, cedar grove, and large open spaces. Honoring the site's deep Native American heritage, one of the three main objectives for BCCC is to better serve the Native American community. The others are to support significantly expanded youth and junior youth activities, and to support Bahá'í cluster activity and the institute process.

Since Brighton Creek Conference Center's official opening for public rental in April 2010, a number of public events have included a 160-person holiday dinner served in celebration of the firefighters of Thurston County and their families, meetings for local community safety and service, and an annual Washington Women's AA retreat.

With an expanded Web presence, a new marketing plan, and the drafting of a master plan for the site—whose implementation is to begin in the coming year with groundbreaking for a Bahá'í-inspired landscaping project—BCCC is poised to be of service to the important processes advancing our clusters and institutes.

Projects envisioned to accommodate growth include landscaping of the entrance area with appropriate signage; improvements in the parking and passenger drop-off areas; planning for a natural, interactive play area for children and youth; a landscaped commons with water retention system and drainage-sensitive pathways and using recycled materials for foundation and seating areas; a small outdoor performance area; and covered and uncovered areas for meditation and prayer.

The BCCC Board continues to operate with a "Balanced Scorecard" approach as a strategic plan for Brighton Creek's long-term future. It sets priorities for the

Center's attention to four key areas of its operation: customers (those served by BCCC programs), staff and volunteers, financial stability and strength, and internal business processes. BCCC staff strives to operate in a joyful spirit and with a vision of cooperative service to humanity for many years to come.

With an expanded Web presence, a new marketing plan, and the drafting of a master plan for the site, BCCC is poised to be of service to the important processes advancing our clusters and institutes.

The HH Board of Directors and staff made use of outside expertise and undertook rigorous reflection, consultation, and action during 2010–11. Significant reorganization resulted.

Health for Humanity

Mission

Health for Humanity (HH) seeks to inspire and mobilize local communities and global resources to improve health through medical service, clinical training, and health education.

Alignment with guidance from the Bahá'í World Center

Health for Humanity celebrated an auspicious milestone on March 21: its 19th anniversary. Since its beginning, HH has derived inspiration from Bahá'í teachings, was fostered through Bahá'í World Center guidance on social and economic development, and has aimed to serve as a humble and effective instrument through which humanity's health can be enhanced. In the spirit of renewing its essential purpose, ensuring its alignment with current guidance, and promoting a future of success and distinctive service, the HH Board of Directors and staff made use of outside expertise and undertook rigorous reflection, consultation, and action during 2010–11. Significant reorganization resulted. With greater focus and coherence, as well as streamlined programs commensurate with sustainable resources, the Board continues its efforts to determine and execute strategic steps for the next stage of HH's development and service.

Significant accomplishments

Over the past year, HH has realized significant accomplishments and received recognition for its work. Among examples:

BLINDNESS PREVENTION PROJECTS.

- In partnership with Alcon Laboratories, an Accurus Surgical System machine for advanced cataract surgery was donated to the Mongolian Bolor Melmii Clinic for charitable use and ophthalmology resident training. HH's contribution was generously acknowledged and publicized by the Mongolian government, Alcon Laboratories, and the eye clinic.
- Through HH sponsorship, advanced ophthalmology training for glaucoma treatment was completed and thereby increased institutional service capacity in one of Mongolia's most prominent hospitals.

MULTI-SPECIALTY MEDICAL VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES.

- Yueyang, China: HH's decade-long partnership with the Yueyang Municipal Government in the Hunan Province of China successfully matured and firmly established local medical education resources to the point that they now function and stand strong, independent of outside assistance.
- Mirzapur, Bangladesh: Local field service capacity-building, with focus on continuing medical education and training, was expanded to support the Kumudini

Welfare Trust's medical, nursing, and dental schools.

- The Board of Directors convened a new committee, the International Health and Education Committee (IHEC), to facilitate exploration, establishment, and coordination of additional volunteer program opportunities.

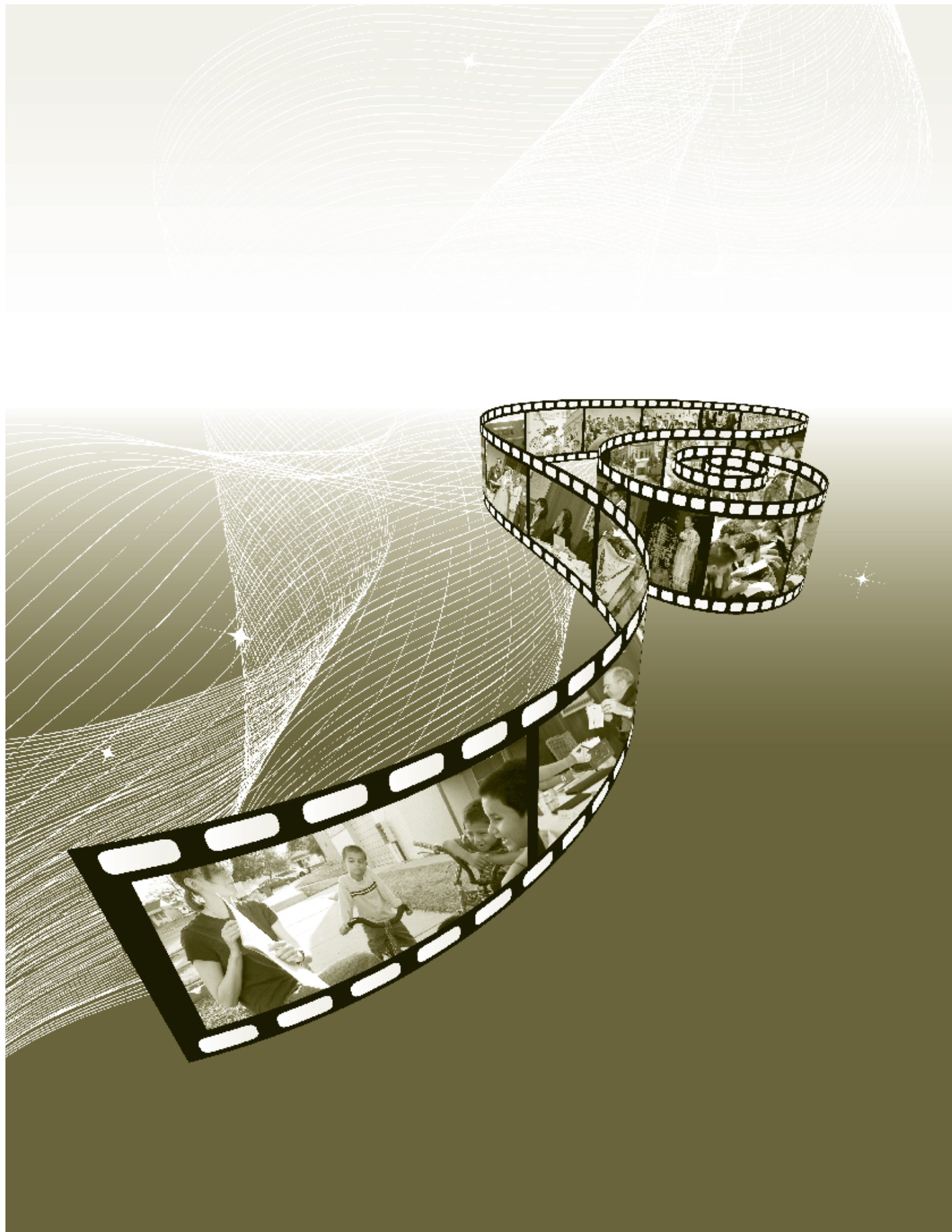
VALUES-BASED LEADERSHIP TRAINING.

- HH developed an initial series of Values-Based Leadership modules prepared for U.S. health-sector-related business use.
- HH completed a Northwestern University pro bono management engagement to explore and develop potential business models for the Values-Based Leadership program.
- HH presented a seminar entitled "Integrating Scientific and Spiritual Skills: Health for Humanity's Experience in Global Health Development" at the 2010 Green Lake Bahá'í Conference in Green Lake, Wisconsin.

Public recognition

- Last summer, Chicago public television station WTTW interviewed one of HH's founding members for a televised program about Health for Humanity's founding and spiritual journey. The video can be viewed on the Web (www.healthforhumanity.org/577).
- At the White House early this winter, the Center for Interfaith Action on Global Poverty and the Global Initiative for Faith, Health and Development released a landmark report in which HH's innovative work was cited as an effective example of instituting fundamental change in global medical training and service delivery.
- This spring, HH presented an interactive family Ayyám-i-Há program on the topic of charitable service and health education at the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois.

Last summer, Chicago public television station WTTW interviewed one of HH's founding members for a televised program about Health for Humanity's founding and spiritual journey.



Annual Report of the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace, University of Maryland

During 2010–11, the Chair focused its efforts on consolidating its diverse activities in teaching, research, and program development. Taken together, these activities present a host of options that mainstream the building of peace and the study of peace at the University of Maryland. Further, they harmonize experiential learning derived from 50 years of international development work with a principle drawn from the Universal House of Justice's statement *The Promise of World Peace*: pragmatic solutions for peace have to be placed in the larger context of principles.

"Crossroads of Peace"

To consolidate its efforts and pull together disparate elements of complex problems, the Chair has created a premier resource for succinct, knowledge- and experience-based videos on topics of international development, peace building, foundational principles of global governance, and related dialogues and consultations in a website called "Crossroads of Peace" (www.crossroadsofpeace.org). This site is intended to be a permanent portal dedicated to facilitating deep reflection for the transformation of material and spiritual understanding and practices in the pursuit of world peace. Designed for the gathering of shared perspectives, it can accommodate growth in the number of participants, in paths that lead in and out of it, and in links to other related resources. The Chair's videos on the site have drawn more than 6,000 views.

In this portal, one will find the consolidated work of the Chair:

Online course on international development

In 2010, the Bahá'í Chair converted the foundational course it teaches for the International Development and Conflict Management minor program into an online series of videos of the course's major themes. Having proved of immense value in improving student learning, these videos are now a resource for anyone interested in the field of development and social change.

Topics and case studies in development

The Chair has developed a unique repository of video presentations on past, present, and future concerns in international development and peace, as well as other key topics that draw upon its independent research. These videos parallel a written text now being drafted for publication.

Dialogues and consultations

The website features publication information and videos of the past Bahá'í Chair Interactive Dialogues for study and reflection.



Appendices

- 153 ...Annual Report of the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace, University of Maryland
- 155 ...Membership of the National Spiritual Assembly and the Regional Bahá'í Councils
- 156 ...Membership of key consultative and directorial bodies

The Chair has created a premier resource for succinct, knowledge- and experience-based videos on topics of international development, peace building, foundational principles of global governance, and related dialogues and consultations in a website called "Crossroads of Peace."

“Pathways to Peace” has been designed and proposed as an introductory course for freshmen to allow them to consider their future studies within the framework of peace.

Foundational principles

The Chair has established a venue for directly addressing the evolving foundational principles of global governance that are playing a key role in evolving world events. “Crossroads of Peace” features videos highlighting selected foundational principles linked to the “Foundational Principles of Global Governance Monitor,” which continues on its own website (www.foundationalprinciplesmonitor.com).

Pathways to Peace at UMD

The Chair has developed, with collaborators, this unique program for peace studies that consists of a core group of university facilitators—the Initiative on Education for Peace, Cooperation, and Development—buttressed by a new student organization—Students of Peace—to facilitate cross-university awareness and collaboration. This program is associated with an iPhone peace app and a website (www.peace.umd.edu) maintained by the Chair. The Chair is acting as a mentor, and finding faculty mentors across campus, for students who wish to make peace a central focus of their studies. “Pathways to Peace” has been designed and proposed as an introductory course for freshmen to allow them to consider their future studies within the framework of peace.

Semester on Peace

A website and a video explaining the program is now posted for study and as a template for others interested in pursuing a similar endeavor.

Other activities of the Chair

Global Communities

In association with a colleague, the Chair developed this program to engage students with the rich ethnic communities surrounding the university through collaborative work on problems that the communities themselves seek to address and help within their own countries.

Global Initiative for Faith, Health, and Development

The Chair became a task force member in this new partnership, which already has held several meetings with White House and United Nations staff. The next planned stage is direct project collaborations between the Chair and other task force members. Details and reports are available online (www.centerforinterfaithaction.org/initiatives/the-global-initiative-for-faith-health-and-development-2010.html).

Dialogue & Consultation Press LLD

The Chair has created a new publishing enterprise for publication of exercises in deep dialogue on key issues of peace, international development, mutual aid, and foundational principles. The status of that initiative can be seen online (www.crossroadsofpeace.org).

Appendix: Membership of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, 2010–2011

Muin Afrani
Kenneth E. Bowers, *Secretary*
Juana C. Conrad
S. Valerie Dana, *Deputy Secretary*
Robert C. Henderson

Jacqueline Left Hand Bull, *Chair*
William L.H. Roberts, *Treasurer*
Erica Toussaint-Brock
David F. Young, *Vice Chair*

Membership of the Regional Bahá'í Councils in the United States

Central States

Solomon Atkins, *Chair*
Yvonne Billingsley, *Vice Chair / Assistant Secretary for Cluster Advancement*
David Douglas, *Secretary*
Dana Farrar, *Treasurer*
Patricia Kubala, *Recording Secretary*
Behrad Majidi
Becky Smith
Lynn Wieties
Breeana Woods

Northeastern States

Nina Dini, *Vice Chair*
Brett Gamboa, *Chair*
Chester Makoski, *Secretary*
Mary K. Makoski
Joel Nizin
Vickie Nizin, *Assistant Secretary for Administration*
Harriet Pasca-Ortgies
Katherine Penn, *Cluster Advancement Coordinator*
Gregory Wooster, *Treasurer*

Northwestern States

Douglas Allen, *Chair*
Carol Brooks, *Recording Secretary*
Henri Cross
Frederick Delgado, *Treasurer*
Dale Eng, *Secretary*
Shannon Javid, *Assistant Secretary for Cluster Advancement*
Todd Kutches, *Vice Chair*
Omid Meshkin
Julianne Redson-Smith

South Central States

Lupita Ahangarzadeh, *Chair*
Aniela Costello, *Cluster Development Coordinator*
Ruth de Vargas
Aram Ferdowsi, *Recording Secretary*
Mark Gilman, *Vice Chair*
Hoda Hosseini
Sohrab Kourosh
John Leonard, *Treasurer*
Regina Rafrat, *Secretary*

Southeastern States

Ford Bowers, *Treasurer*
Navid Haghighi, *Vice Chair*
Robert James, *Chair*
Ahmad Mahboubi
Carole Miller
Corinne Mills, *Assistant Secretary for Cluster Advancement*
Mahyar Mofidi, *Secretary*
Janice Sadeghian, *Assistant Secretary*
James Sturdivant

Southwestern States

Payam Adlparvar
Shad Afsahi, *Treasurer*
Fariba Aghdasi, *Assistant Secretary for Cluster Advancement*
Jerry Bathke, *Chair*
Gary Bulkin
Randolph Dobbs, *Secretary*
Marsha Gilpatrick
Charleen Maghzi, *Recording Secretary*
Farhad Sabetan, *Vice Chair*

Appendix: Membership of key consultative and directorial bodies

National committees and task forces

Office of Review Task Force

Shahin Borhanian
Charles Carnegie
Gary Matthews
Richard Schickele
Martha Schweitz
Matthew Weinberg

Bahá'í Center Assistance Board

Carl Dean Clingenpeel
Sharon Dixon Peay
Farzad Ferdowsi, *Secretary*
Ron Lillejord, *Treasurer*
Farshad Monfared, *Recording Secretary*
Lee Ratcliff, *Vice Chair*
Mahdad Saniee, *Chair*

Advisory groups

Wilmette Institute

Advisory Board

Nicola Daniels
Cathy Higgins
Missy Martin
Mark Rossman
Robert Stockman

Bahá'í Service for the Blind Advisory Board

Robert Dickson
Bill Peary
Lynne Peary
John Simpson
Laurie Simpson

Financial Advisory Group

Shad Afsahi
Nava Ashraf
Badi Azad
Gregory Belzer
Ford Bowers
Ray Cameron
Frederick Delgado
Faran Ferdowsi
Douglas Henck
Matthew Hughey
Sam Jones
Badi Klem
Grant Kvalheim
Ron Lillejord
Behnam Malek Khosravi
Marcus McKerley
Aida Shahid McNamara
Linda Moran
Chad Mosley
Tom Nowak
Sharon Dixon Peay
Mehrdad Rassekh
Stephen Vaccaro
Enoch Varner
Gregory Wooster

Affiliates' boards and executive committees

Association for Bahá'í Studies–North America Executive Committee

Lisa Dufraimont, *Vice Chair / Conference Program Co-Chair*
Mehran Kiai, *Treasurer*
Pierre-Yves Mocquais, *Chair / Academic Director*
Kim Naqvi, *Conference Program Co-Chair*
Parvin Rowhani, *Recording Secretary / Office Manager*
Martha Schweitz, *Secretary*

Association of Friends of Persian Culture Board of Directors

Goli Ataii
Guitty Ejtemai
Changiz Geula
Hermien Hoveydai
Jaleh Joubine-Khadem
Manuchehr Khodadad
Fuad Ziai

Authenticity Institute Board of Directors

Leslie Asplund
Sheri Dressler
Jack Guillebeaux
Joan Haskell
Michael Penn
Mary K. Radpour

Brighton Creek Conference Center Board of Directors

Laura Baerwolf, *Secretary*
Madeline de Maintenon
Shelley de Maintenon
Lonnie Locke
Majid Mohajer-Jasbi, *Treasurer*
Christopher Gilbert, *Chair*
Karl Seehorn
Roy Steiner, *Vice Chair*
Candace Watkins
Richard Kendall, *Executive Director*

Health for Humanity Board of Directors

Gity Banan-Etemad
Jennifer Chapman
(through November 2010)
Richard Czerniejewski, *Vice Chair*
Stephen Jackson (through November 2010)
William McMiller, *Vice Chair*
John Safapour, *Secretary*
Geoffrey Wilson, *Chair / Treasurer*